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ABSTRACT

The Program Standards Evaluation System was developed in response to evaluation requirements in the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. The system includes procedures for using standards data to monitor and evaluate vocational rehabilitation (VR) service outcomes and outputs as well as standards on key procedural issues. This trainee handbook has been prepared for persons receiving training in the use of the Rehabilitation Services Administration's Vocational Rehabilitation Program Standards Evaluation System and in collection of information for performance and procedural standards. The materials have been designed to be used in conjunction with verbal and visual presentation materials. This handbook contains an introduction to the Program Standards Evaluation System and its uses. Organized into five chapters, it is intended to provide the reader with an overview of the system's individual components as well as the system's overall logic. Individual chapters provide fuller detail on the conceptualization and implementation of specific aspects of the system. The five chapters cover the following topics: (1) an overview of the Program Standards System; (2) computing and presenting the eight performance standards; (3) administering the closure and followup surveys; (4) the five procedural standards; and (5) an introduction to the modified case review schedule. (KC)

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EHB 30756

# VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM STANDARDS EVALUATION SYSTEM

## TRAINING MATERIALS

TRAINER'S MANUAL

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## PREFACE

These materials have been prepared for individuals receiving training in the use of the RSA Vocational Rehabilitation Program Standards Evaluation System and in collection of information for performance and procedural standards. The materials have been designed to be used in conjunction with verbal and visual presentation materials. More detailed information on the standards system can be found in two earlier Berkeley Planning Associates' reports, the Program Standards Analytic Paradigm (Berkeley, California: June 11, 1982) and the Program Standards Guidance Materials (Berkeley, California: November 17, 1981).

June 8, 1982

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## INTRODUCTION

The 1973 Rehabilitation Act contained, among its many other provisions, a requirement that evaluation standards be devised and implemented to measure the performance of the VR program in achieving its mandate. Over the last four years, Berkeley Planning Associates, under contract to the Rehabilitation Services Administration, has developed a revised system of evaluation standards. Two distinct sub-systems of performance measures were developed. One, the proposed Program Evaluation Standards, evaluates the federal-state VR programs. The other, the proposed Project Evaluation Standards, measures the effectiveness of individual projects, as well as aggregated program authorities funded by RSA discretionary funds. During the last three years, these systems were pretested in six model state evaluation units. In this pretest, BPA assumed the responsibilities which will ultimately be under the authority, and perhaps actual execution, of RSA, by providing training in the instruments and procedures for their administration, providing technical assistance to the states in conducting the pretest and analyzing their data, and providing the basic reporting of the states' performance.

The final recommended Program Standards consist of eight Performance Standards and associated data elements; and five Procedural Standards and associated data elements (see Table 1). The Performance Standards pertain to service outputs and outcomes (e.g., coverage, effectiveness, impact), while the Procedural Standards pertain to service method and process (e.g., case handling). If implemented, the Program Standards would require a revised reporting system for all state agencies. The federal administration would, in turn, generate information for measuring the achievement of overall program goals and for monitoring key processes which protect client interests. In addition, the system design includes a mechanism for analyzing and understanding the factors contributing to goal achievement, and for applying that understanding in support of federal and state program managers and policy makers in decisions regarding changes in program procedures and policy, state needs for technical assistance, and program needs for further investigation.

Table 1

VR Program Standards and Data Elements: Final Recommendations, 1981

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND DATA ELEMENTS

1. Coverage

VR shall serve the maximum proportion of the potentially eligible target population, subject to the level of federal program funding and priorities among clients.

(i) Clients served per 100,000 population
(ii) Percent severely disabled served

2. Cost-Effectiveness and Benefit-Cost Return

The VR program shall use resources in a cost-effective manner and show a positive return to society of investment in vocational rehabilitation of disabled clients.

(i) Expenditures per competitively employed closure
(ii) Expenditure per 26 closure
(iii) Ratio of total VR benefits to total VR costs (Benefit-cost ratio)
(iv) Total net benefit from VR services (Discounted net present value)

3. Rehabilitation Rate

VR shall maximize the number and proportion of clients accepted for services who are successfully rehabilitated, subject to the meeting of other standards.

(i) Percent 26 closures
(ii) Annual change in number of 26 closures

4. Economic Independence

Rehabilitated clients shall evidence economic independence.

(i) Percent 26 closures with weekly earnings at/above federal minimum wage
(ii) Comparison of earnings of competitively employed 26 closures to earnings of employees in state

5. Gainful Activity

There shall be maximum placement of rehabilitated clients into competitive employment. Noncompetitive closures shall represent an improvement in gainful activity for the client.

(i) Percent 26 closures competitively employed
(ii) Percent competitively employed 26 closures with hourly earnings at/above federal minimum wage
(iii) Percent noncompetitively employed 26 closures showing improvement in function and life status (implement after FAI/LSI pretest)

6. Client Change

Rehabilitated clients shall evidence vocational gains.

(i) Comparison of earnings before and after VR services
(ii) (In addition, changes in other statuses, and functioning ability, when such measures become available)

7. Retention

Rehabilitated clients shall retain the benefits of VR services.

(i) Percent 26 closures retaining earnings at follow-up
(ii) Comparison of 26 closures with public assistance as primary source of support at closure and at follow-up
(iii) Percent noncompetitively employed 26 closures retaining closure skills at follow-up (implement after FAI/LSI pretest)

8. Satisfaction

Clients shall be satisfied with the VR program, and rehabilitated clients shall appraise VR services as useful in achieving and maintaining their vocational objectives.

(i) Percent closed clients satisfied with overall VR experience
(ii) Percent closed clients satisfied with: counselor, physical restoration, job training services, placement services
(iii) Percent 26 closures judging services received as useful in obtaining their job/homemaker situation or in current performance

Table 1 (cont.)

PROCEDURAL STANDARDS

9. R-300 Validity

Information collected on clients by the R-300 and all data reporting systems used by RSA shall be valid, reliable, accurate, and complete.

10. Eligibility

Eligibility decisions shall be based on accurate and sufficient diagnostic information, and VR shall continually review and evaluate eligibility decisions to ensure that decisions are being made in accordance with laws and regulations.

11. Timeliness

VR shall ensure that eligibility decisions and client movement through the VR process occur in a timely manner appropriate to the needs and capabilities of the clients.

12. IWRP

VR shall provide an Individualized Written Rehabilitation Program for each applicable client and VR and the client shall be accountable to each other for complying with this agreement.

13. Goal Planning

Counselors shall make an effort to set realistic goals for clients. Comprehensive consideration must be given to all factors in developing appropriate vocational goals such that there is a maximum of correspondence between goals and outcomes: competitive goals should have competitive outcomes and noncompetitive goals should have noncompetitive outcomes.

This Trainee Handbook is designed as an introduction to the Program Standards Evaluation System and its uses. It is intended to provide the reader with an overview of the system's individual components as well as the system's overall logic. Individual chapters have been developed to provide fuller detail on the conceptualization and implementation of specific aspects of this system.

# Vocational Rehabilitation Program
# Standards Evaluation System

## Trainee Handbook-A:

## An Overview of the
## Program Standards System

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# AN OVERVIEW OF THE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS SYSTEM

## DESCRIPTION OF THE VR STANDARDS: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Federal-State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program provides resources to disabled persons who confront handicaps, and have vocational potential. The institutionalization of the VR Program, which became law in 1920, was assisted by the compelling economic argument that a self-supporting citizen was preferable, in terms of the national welfare, to a disabled person who was dependent upon public support. Initially, the legislation was concerned with providing the physically disabled the medical services necessary for them to find jobs. In subsequent amendments to the legislation, the scope of eligibility and services was expanded to include services to the family of the handicapped and to cases of psychological disorder, alcoholism and drug abuse. In addition, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 included a mandate to serve the severely disabled, those with the most handicapping conditions and in need of more intensive services.

Consistent with the historical emphasis on employment, the success of service to a client has been measured by whether or not the client is "closed rehabilitated" or placed in a work situation for at least 60 days after closure. Competitive employment has been the favored placement, but success may also be claimed for placement in sheltered employment or in a homemaker or unpaid family worker situation. These last two options are considered successes because performance of these roles may free other family members to enter the work force.

The 1973 Act also contained a provision calling for the development and use of program performance standards. Specifically, the Act provided that:

> "The Secretary shall develop and publish general standards for evaluation of the programs and project effectiveness in achieving the objectives of this Act..." [P.L. 92-112, Section 401(3)(6)]

The first standards, published in 1974, were prepared by RSA and reviewed by members of the Council of State Vocational Rehabilitation Administrators (CSAVR). These standards identified a number of features in the rehabilitation process. The performance of each state agency was to be compared against other agencies. States would learn about their comparative performance after each state result was included in the standards analysis.

For standards which focused heavily on compliance with the spirit and management of the rehabilitation process, data elements or statistical measures which drew upon regularly reported client and program data were identified. The norm for performance on most elements was set as plus or minus one standard deviation from the mean performance of all state VR agencies.

While the original set of standards met the requirements for reporting set forth in the Act, RSA sought further refinement in the system. A second developmental activity was supported to build upon the state's experiences with the first standards in order to develop a better system. In 1975, RSA contracted with the Urban Institute to use a much more analytical approach to refining the standards. The Institute had proposed the development of a simulation model of the rehabilitation system, and the ultimate setting of standards performance levels based upon an analysis using the model.

In its final reports, the Institute criticized the existing standards system and recommended development of sophisticated statistical techniques needed for comparison of state programs leading to a comprehensive micro-simulation or "overall evaluation framework." The Institute effort resulted in focusing RSA and state attention on a number of conceptual and analytical problems and issues inherent in the development of standards. It did not, however, result in changes in the existing standards.

In the Fall of 1976, RSA again called for further development and refinement of the standards through a contract with Berkeley Planning Associates (BPA). This work called for a new conceptual approach to the development and refinement of the standards.

The states' reaction to the 1974/75 standards pointed to the need for reassessing the content and purpose of a performance standards system

for rehabilitation. BPA's new design effort began with an examination of alternative conceptual approaches to the development of standards. A review of standards-setting in other social service fields[1] showed a variety of approaches, from a focus of inputs (either as structural or "gate-keeping" eligibility standards) to processes (measures of "best practice") to outcomes (or program impacts). After analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of these alternative approaches,[2] an approach which emphasized program outcome was recommended. In 1978, BPA developed a set of revised performance standards, focusing on several measures of rehabilitation success. In addition, several standards for procedure were defined.

Following the development of the revised standards, BPA conducted an extensive pre-test of the system in six sample states. This experience, as well as a careful review of the system by numerous experts in the field, resulted in another wave of revisions in 1981.

BPA's final recommended standards and data elements for measuring and monitoring their achievement are shown in Table 1. This table compares these standards and data elements to the BPA proposed standards of 1978 and to the existing standards promulgated and in use since the mid-1970s. A close examination of the table will reveal that the changes between the two BPA recommended sets of standards are relatively small and technical, as compared to the differences between the BPA standards and the existing standards. Reviewed individually, the standards are as follows:

- The first standard addresses coverage, or the extent to which the vocational rehabilitation program is serving the eligible target population. The need to ensure accessibility of services to all the eligible disabled is of paramount importance to RSA and the states. The first data element -- clients served per 100,000 population -- provides a proxy measure of coverage of eligible population. The second measure -- percent of clients served who are severely disabled -- measures achievement of the priority legislated for the severely disabled by Congress.

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[1] VR Program Evaluation Standards: A Critique of the State of the Art. Berkeley Planning Associates, Berkeley, California, January 7, 1977, pp. 42-48.

[2] Alternative Conceptual Approaches to Standards (Working Paper #2), Berkeley Planning Associates, Berkeley, California, March 25, 1977.

Table 1

Evolution of VR Program Standards

Performance Standards

| 1981 Revised BPA Standards | 1976-1978 BPA Standards | 1975 General Standards for Evaluation |
|---|---|---|
| 1. VR shall serve the maximum proportion of the potentially eligible target population, subject to the level of federal program funding and priorities among clients<br>(i) Clients served per 100,000 population<br>(ii) Percent severely disabled | 1. VR shall serve the maximum proportion of the potentially eligible target population, subject to the level of federal program funding and priorities among clients<br>(i) Comparison of caseload served to expenditures<br>(ii) Clients served per 100,000 population | 1. To insure that the rehabilitation program is serving the eligible disabled population and that these services are provided in an equitable manner<br>(i) Estimate of the total population eligible for VR services<br>(ii) Number of accepted cases served (statuses 10-30) for the year<br>(iii) Percent of annual increase or decrease in number of accepted cases served (statuses 10-30)*<br>(iv) Number of cases closed rehabilitated during the year (status 26)<br>(v) Accepted cases (statuses 10-24) as a percentage of the total of cases closed not accepted (status 08) plus those cases accepted (statuses 10-24) |
| 2. The VR program shall use resources in a cost-effective manner and show a positive return to society of investment in vocational rehabilitation of disabled clients<br>(i) Expenditures per competitively employed closure<br>(ii) Expenditure per 26 closure<br>(iii) Benefit-cost ratio<br>(iv) Discounted net present value | 2. The VR program shall use resources in a cost-effective manner and show a positive return to society of investment in vocational rehabilitation of disabled clients<br>(i) Expenditure per competitively employed closure<br>(ii) Expenditure per 26 closure<br>(iii) Benefit-cost ratio<br>(iv) Discounted net present value | 4. To insure that available resources are utilized to achieve maximum operational efficiency<br>(i) Average case service cost per accepted case closure (statuse 26, 28 and 30) where case service cost to the state vocational rehabilitation agency was involved<br>(ii) Percent of clients receiving rehabilitation services at no cost to the vocational rehabilitation agency<br>(iii) Percent distribution of total vocational rehabilitation dollars spent for agency operations each fiscal year as reported on the RSA-2 expenditure report<br>(iv) Average case service cost per type of vocational rehabilitation case service involving cost to the state agency, and percentage of individuals receiving specific vocational rehabilitation service |
| 3. VR shall maximize the number and proportion of clients accepted for services who are successfully rehabilitated, subject to the meeting of other standards<br>(i) Percent 26 closures<br>(ii) Annual change in number of 26 closures | 3. VR shall maximize the number and proportion of clients accepted for services who are successfully rehabilitated, subject to the meeting of other standards<br>(i) Percent 26 closures | 2. To insure that rehabilitated clients are placed in gainful employment suitable to their capabilities<br>(i) Percent of those placed in competitive employment (wage and salary earners and self-employment)<br>(ii) Percent of those placed in noncompetitive employment (sheltered workshop and others)<br>(iii) Percent of those placed as homemakers<br>(iv) Percent of those placed as unpaid family worker<br>(v) Percent of those placed in business enterprise program |

* This data element does not appear in the 1979 analysis.

Table 1 (continued)

Performance Standards (continued)

| 1981 Revised BPA Standards | 1976-1978 BPA Standards | 1975 General Standards for Evaluation |
|---|---|---|
| 4. Rehabilitated clients shall evidence economic independence<br>(i) Percent 26 closures with weekly earnings at/above federal minimum wage<br>(ii) Comparison of earnings of competitively employed 26 closures to earnings of employees in state | 4. Rehabilitated clients shall evidence increased economic independence<br>(i) Percent 26 closures with weekly earnings at/above federal minimum wage<br>(ii) Comparison of earnings of competitively employed 26 closures to earnings of employees in state<br>(iii) Comparison of earnings before and after VR services<br>(iv) Comparison of 26 closures with public assistance as primary source of support before and after VR services | 2. To insure that rehabilitated clients are placed in gainful employment suitable to their capacities<br>(vii) Average weekly earnings in the week before referral of all rehabilitated clients, including clients with zero earnings<br>(viii) Average weekly earnings at closure of all rehabilitated clients, including clients with zero earnings |
| 5. There shall be maximum placement of rehabilitated clients into competitive employment. Noncompetitive closures shall represent an improvement in gainful activity for the client<br>(i) Percent 26 closures competitively employed<br>(ii) Percent competitively employed 26 closures with hourly earnings at/above federal minimum wage<br>(iii) Percent noncompetitively employed 26 closures showing improvement in function and life status | 5. There shall be maximum placement of rehabilitated clients into competitive employment. Noncompetitive closures shall be in accordance with the IWRP goal and shall represent an improvement in gainful activity for the client.<br>(i) Percent 26 closures competitively employed<br>(ii) Percent 26 closures with hourly earnings at/above federal minimum wage<br>(iii) Percent noncompetitively employed 26 closures showing improvement in gainful activity<br>(iv) Percent 26 closures with competitive outcomes or with noncompetitive outcome and noncompetitive goal | 2. To insure that rehabilitated clients are placed in gainful employment suitable to their capabilities<br>(i) Percent of those placed in competitive employment (wage and salary earners and self-employment) |
| 6. Rehabilitated clients shall evidence vocational gains (client change)<br>(i) Comparison of earnings before and after VR services<br>(ii) (In addition, changes in other statuses, and functional ability, when such measures become available) | | |

Table 1 (continued)

Performance Standards (continued)

| 1981 Revised BPA Standards | 1976-1978 BPA Standards | 1975 General Standards for Evaluation |
|---|---|---|
| | 6. Vocational gains shall be attributable to VR services (causality)<br>(i) Comparison of earnings change from referral to closure of 26 closures to earnings change of a control group | |
| 7. Rehabilitated clients shall retain the benefits of VR services<br>(i) Percent 26 closures retaining earnings at follow-up<br>(ii) Comparison of 26 closures with public assistance as primary source of support at closure and at follow-up<br>(iii) Percent noncompetitively employed 26 closures retaining closure skills at follow-up | 7. Rehabilitated clients shall retain the benefits of VR services<br>(i) Percent 26 closures retaining earnings at follow-up<br>(ii) Comparison of 26 closures with public assistance as primary source of support at closure and at follow-up<br>(iii) Percent noncompetitively employed 26 closures retaining closure skills at follow-up | 6. To insure that clients closed rehabilitated retain the benefits obtained from the rehabilitation process<br>(i) Percent of rehabilitated clients still employed at time of follow-up, specifying one year, two years, or three years after closure<br>(ii) Percent with earnings at follow-up, mean earnings at follow-up<br>(iii) Percent increase or decrease of earnings at follow-up<br>(iv) Percent of rehabilitated clients (status 26) unemployed at follow-up for: less than one month, one to three months, four to six months, seven to 12 months, more than 12 months |
| 8. Clients shall be satisfied with the VR program, and rehabilitated clients shall appraise VR services as useful in achieving and maintaining their vocational objectives<br>(i) Percent closed clients satisfied with overall VR experience<br>(ii) Percent closed clients satisfied with: information provided, counselor promptness, physical restoration, job training services, placement services<br>(iii) Percent 26 closures judging services received as useful in obtaining their job/homemaker situation or in current performance | 8. Clients shall be satisfied with the VR program, and rehabilitated clients shall appraise VR services as useful in achieving and maintaining their vocational objectives<br>(i) Percent closed clients satisfied with overall VR experience<br>(ii) Percent closed clients satisifed with specific aspects of VR<br>(iii) Percent 26 closures judging services received to have been useful in obtaining their job/homemaker situation<br>(iv) Percent 26 closures judging services to be useful in current performance on the job/homemaker situation | 9. To insure that the client is satisifed with the vocational rehabilitation services as developed with the counselor<br>(i) Percent of clients rehabilitated throughout the fiscal year (status 26) and not rehabilitated (statuses 28 plus 30) throughout the fiscal year who express satisfaction with the following, specifying one year, two years, or three years:<br>(a) counselor's willingness to listen to client's ideas and suggestions in developing the IWRP<br>(b) adequacy of information provided by counselor to clients for understanding their disability<br>(c) promptness in the delivery of services<br>(d) kind of training received<br>(e) benefits of training received<br>(f) assistance in seeking job and final employment<br>(g) results of physical restoration services<br>(iv) Percentage of clients contacted during the follow-up period who stated they would recommend vocational rehabilitation to a disabled friend |

Table 1 (continued)

Procedural Standards*

| 1981 Revised BPA Standards | 1976-1978 BPA Standards | 1975 General Standards for Evaluation |
|---|---|---|
| 9. Information collected on clients by the R-300 and all data reporting systems used by RSA shall be valid, reliable, accurate, and complete | 9. Information collected on clients by the R-300 and all data reporting systems used by RSA shall be valid, reliable, accurage, and complete | |
| 10. Eligibility decisions shall be based on accurate and sufficient diagnostic information, and VR shall continually review and evaluate eligibility decisions to insure that decisions are being made in accordance with laws and regulations | 10. Eligibility decisions shall be based on accurate and sufficient diagnostic information, and VR shall continually review and evaluate eligibility decisions to insure that decisions are being made in accordance with laws and regulations | |
| 11. VR shall insure that eligibility decisions and client movement through the VR process occur in a timely manner appropriate to the needs and capabilities of the clients | 11. VR shall insure that eligibility decisions and client movement through the VR process occur in a timely manner appropriate to the needs and capabilities of the clients | 3. To insure that undue delays are avoided in providing clients with VR services<br>(i) Average time from combined referral-applicant statuses (statuses 00-02) to closed not accepted (status 08)<br>(ii) Average time in extended evaluation (status 06) for cases closed not accepted (status 08)<br>(iii) Average time from combined referral-applicant statuses (statuses 00-02) to accepted statuses for cases closed rehabilitated (status 26) and closed not rehabilitated (statuses 28-30) during the fiscal year<br>(iv) Average time in extended evaluation (status 06) for cases closed rehabilitated (status 26) and closed not rehabilitated (statuses 28 and 30) during the fiscal year<br>(v) Average time from accepted case statuses (statuses 10-24) to closed rehabilitated (status 26)<br>(vi) Average time in accepted case statuses (statuses 10-24) to closed not rehabilitated after rehabilitation program was initiated (status 28)<br>(vii) Average time in accepted case statuses (statuses 10-24) to closed not rehabilitated before the rehabilitation program was initiated (status 30) |
| 12. VR shall provide an individualized Written Rehabilitation Program for each applicable client and VR and the client shall be accountable to each other for complying with this agreement | 12. VR shall provide an individualized Written Rehabilitation Program for each applicable client and VR and the client shall be accountable to each other for complying with this agreement | |

*Procedural Standards are not measured with data elements, but through case review and use of designed instruments. For more information, please see BPA's Report on the Pretest of the Revised Vocational Rehabilitation Program Standards, Volume 2, Draft, 16 July 1981.

Table 1 (continued)

Performance Standards (continued)

| 1981 Revised BPA Standards | 1976-1978 BPA Standards | 1975 General Standards for Evaluation |
|---|---|---|
| | | 5. To insure that manageable-sized caseloads are maintained<br>(i) Number of caseload carrying counselor man years<br>(ii) Number of authorized and funded full-time caseload carrying counselor positions<br>(iii) Number and percent of rehabilitation counselor turnover, i.e., hiring rate and separation rate<br>(iv) Average size of caseloads as of September 30 per number of authorized and funded caseload carrying counselor positions<br>(v) Describe the process, if any, employed by the state for each of the following functions: caseload management; caseload monitoring; caseload review<br><br>7. To insure that the need for post-employment services is satisfied<br>(i) Percent of rehabilitated clients in the previous fiscal year (status 26) receiving post-employment (post-closure services during the 12 months following closure<br>(ii) Percent receiving the following types of post-employment services of the total receiving post-employment services:<br>(a) diagnostic and evaluation<br>(b) restoration (physical and mental)<br>(c) training<br>(d) guidance and counseling only<br>(e) maintenance<br>(f) transportation<br>(g) other<br><br>8. To insure that agencies are consistenly identifying reasons why clients are not successfully rehabilitated<br>(i) Percent of status 08,28, and 30 closures by the following reasons:<br>(a) unable to locate or unable to contact or moved<br>(b) handicap too severe or unfavorable medical prognosis<br>(c) refused services or further services<br>(d) death<br>(e) client institutionalized<br>(f) transferred to another agency<br>(g) failure to cooperate<br>(h) no disabling condition (08 closure only)<br>(i) no vocational handicap (08 closure only)<br>(j) other<br>(ii) Cases closed not rehabilitated (statuses 28 plus 30) as a percentage of the total accepted cases closed (statuses 26 plus 28 plus 30) |

Table 1 (continued)

Procedural Standards (continued)

| 1981 Revised BPA Standards | 1976-1978 BPA Standards | 1975 General Standards for Evaluation |
|---|---|---|
| 13. Counselors shall make an effort to set realistic goals for clients. Comprehensive consideration must be given to all factors in developing appropriate vocational goals such that there is a maximum of correspondence between goals and outcomes: competitive goals should have competitive outcomes and non-competitive goals should have non-competitive outcomes. | | 2. To insure that rehabilitated clients are placed in gainful employment suitable to their capabilities<br>(vi) Those who received training related to the job family in which they were placed (as identified by the first digit of the Dictionary of Occupational Titles code) as a percentage of the total number who received training |

• The second standard addresses directly the cost-effectiveness of the state program's overall use of resources, and the benefit-cost returns from investment in vocational rehabilitation services. The first two data elements measure the cost of achieving desirable outcomes -- first, expenditures per competitively employed closures, and second, the expenditure per 26 closure. The focus on competitively employed closures recognizes the policy decision in RSA that such a closure is the program's highest priority. The second two data elements focus on the two accepted measures of benefit-cost returns -- the benefit-cost ratio and discounted present value. The benefit-cost model developed at Berkeley and used over the years by RSA and many state agencies for reports to Congress and state legislatures, and which was favorably reviewed by many independent specialists, is the model used to generate these summary data elements. The model is to be expanded by incorporation of subsystems being developed by the Texas Institute for Rehabilitation Research (TIRR) for taking the less monetary benefits of increased functional capacity and other aspects of independent living into account.

• The third standard monitors the quality of service outcomes being achieved by the program and uses the traditional data elements of percent of closures which are successful (the 26 closure) and annual change in the number of 26 closures. These data elements have a long history of use and acceptance in state programs as measures of how many clients VR is successfully serving.

• The fourth standard focuses on whether rehabilitated clients evidence increased economic independence, recognizing that VR's most basic purpose is to assist disabled persons in finding gainful employment that will permit their economic self-sufficiency. Two data elements compare the wages achieved by rehabilitants to national standards (the minimum wage) and to state norms (earnings of employees in the state). These again are measures of the quality of service outcomes.

• The fifth standard focuses on competitive and non-competitive employment outcomes in order to assess the quality of closures obtained by VR agencies. The first two data elements measure the percent of 26 closures who achieve competitive employment, and among these the percent employed at or above the national standards of the minimum wage. The last data element

recognizes that competitive employment may not be the appropriate placement for all clients, but that it still is important that rehabilitation services achieve improvements in gainful activity for those clients for whom employment is not the goal. For non-competitive closures, then, a data element measures the percent showing improvements in function and life status. The instrumentation for determining such improvements is being developed by others for inclusion in the MIS, and will be pretested in subsequent years by RSA.

- The sixth standard is directed at measuring client change before and after service. The 1978 standards recommended probing causal relationships between services and outcomes and judging how much of the gain exhibited by clients is really attributable to the services they receive. This was because both clients of VR and non-clients may show, over the same time period, increased earnings, increased levels of skills, and other vocational gains. After pretesting a range of measures, including the use of comparison groups of unsuccessful closures, data elements are recommended which simply measure "before-after" changes in earnings and (when MIS data becomes available) in functional capability. These measures are highly limited for inputing causality to VR service impact but they provide some control for the client's capability prior to services. BPA has recommended that the mandate for establishing causality be fulfilled through periodic controlled research studies of clients on a national level as part of supportive evaluation under taken by RSA. The complexity of such research makes it infeasible for completion by state programs as part of their routine, ongoing evaluation activity. Thus the focus of the standard becomes one of measuring client change, rather than establishing that the clients' change is due to VR services.

- The seventh standard again monitors quality of service outcome and overall program effectiveness, and focuses on the retention of client benefits from VR services over time. The data elements draw on follow-up data after case closure to monitor retention of earnings by individual 26 closures, the percent of 26 closures who remain non-dependent on public assistance as their primary source of support, and the percent of non-competitively employed 26 closures who retain their enhanced independent living and functional skills.

- The eighth and last performance standard monitors the consumer's appraisal of services -- client satisfaction with VR services. Two data elements include measures of client satisfaction with overall services and various aspects of services (e.g., counselor promptness, the quality of placement services). The third data element moves beyond satisfaction to monitor the client's judgement that services received were useful in obtaining his/her job or homemaking situation.

Abandoned in the proposed standards revision are those elements in the existing standards which focused on post-employment services, manageable-sized caseloads, the reasons for unsuccessful rehabilitation, and the length in time of the service process. The proposed new performance standards monitor outcomes and cost-effectiveness, not service process.

In addition to the performance standards, the revised proposed standar include five procedural standards that do focus attention on critical process areas and on data validity. Assessment of performance on these standar is to occur using instrumentation and procedures (modifications of the Case Review Schedule developed by the San Diego State RCEP IX) developed for gathering uniform data from state agencies. The procedural standards focus on the validity and completeness of R-300 data, the need for eligibility decisions to be based on adequate diagnostic data and to conform to federal laws and regulations, the desirability that eligibility decisions and movement through the VR process be completed in a timely manner appropriate to the needs of clients, compliance with the requirement for the Individualized Written Rehabilitation Program, and the need for realistic goal-setting for clients and adherence to the policy of seeking competitive employment outcomes when feasible.

## PURPOSE OF THE REVISED PROGRAM STANDARDS SYSTEM

Three principal purposes underline all of the developmental work BPA has conducted on the Standards System. Simply put, the primary purposes of the program standards are:

- to guide the behavior of state VR agencies towards greater achievement;

- to make available information on the state VR agencies achievements with respect to the goals and functions of the VR system, as measured by the standards data elements; and,
- to identify possible problems and corrective actions, whenever state VR agencies are unable to reach their objectives for achievement.

Guiding the Behavior of the State VR Agencies.

One unique feature of the revised standards system is that it is oriented to guiding and changing the behavior of the state VR agencies in new directions, not just reporting on past behavior. Whereas the current standards system calculates performance norms based upon central tendency measures for the nation as a whole, the revised standards system is designed to allow setting of future performance goals, based upon the individual state's past performance. In the revised system, each state (1) sets its own objectives under the standards for evaluative comparison; and (2) has the option of deciding which other state programs, if any, should provide appropriate comparison for assessing the state's performance. State agencies can consider such things as their past program performance, their available resources, the demand on these resources, and their particular policies when setting their performance goals.

In short, the revised standards system replaces a federally-directive set of "after the fact" norms with future-oriented goals set by the individual state programs. By setting goals in advance, the VR system can be guided in the directions dictated by the states and RSA. However, it should be noted that no sanctions are built into the Program Standards system. That is, no punitive actions are tied to the failure of a state VR agency to meet its objectives. Funding decisions are also not based upon the achievement of certain objectives. Instead, the revised standards system is concerned with flagging problematic attainment, investigating possible problems, and identifying and taking corrective actions as necessary.

Providing Information

The revised standards system shares with the existing standards system the purpose of providing information to RSA, to the state VR agencies, and to other interested parties, such as OMB and Congress, on the achievement of state VR agencies. Information will be provided on the VR program as a whole, and on each state VR agency. Information will be provided on current achievement, as well as past achievement. Moreover, other information relevant to the VR program will be provided as part of the revised standards system.

Identification of Problems and of Corrective Action

Another unique feature of the revised standards system is that it does not stop when a state VR agency does not meet its objective on a particular standard data element. Instead, a newly-developed data-based decision support system identifies possible problems and corrective actions. This system is designed to enable program managers to quickly identify whether possible problems can be identified or whether further investigative research is required.

Summary

In sum, the focus of the new standards system is state agency management improvement and evaluation capacity. The federal role is proposed as one of necessary data provision, the generation and making available of comparison data as appropriate, and the provision of technical assistance to the state agency for interpreting standards data and identifying how to improve program performance. The leadership role in improving state performance is assigned to the individual state agency under the revised standards system.

STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAM STANDARDS SYSTEM

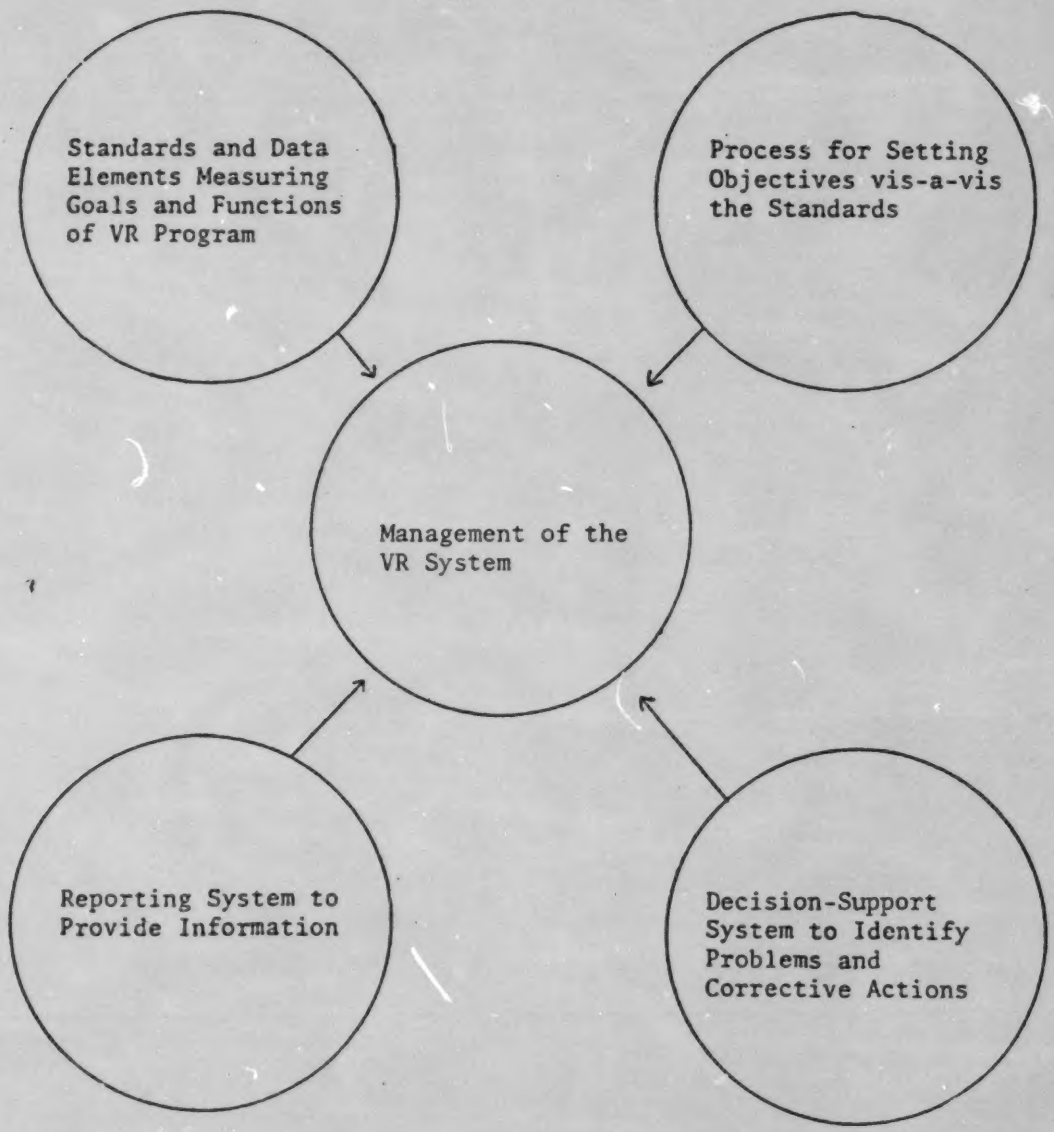
The Program Standards system has several components, as shown in Figure 1:

- Standards and Data Elements. A set of eight Performance Standards and five Procedural Standards, with associated data elements, measures the goals and functions of the VR program with respect to coverage, cost-effectiveness, impact of client services, compliance, data quality, and the process of service delivery.
- Process for Setting Performance Objectives. A process for setting objectives for each state VR agency on each of the standards data elements provides clear expectations for achievement, expectations that are set in conjunction with each agency.
- Reporting System. A reporting system presents the levels of achievement of state VR agencies on the measures of the goals and functions of the VR system which are captured in the standards data elements. The system also identifies those state VR agencies with difficulties in achieving their performance expectations. Background information on past achievement, the achievement of other state VR agencies, the components of the data elements, and on information data elements are also presented.
- Data-Based Decision-Support System. Possible reasons for problematic attainment of a particular state VR agency on a particular data element are identified, either through investigation by program managers or through further evaluation research. In addition, corrective actions are identified for each possible problem.

As can be seen from Figure 1, all four of these components are oriented to the management of the VR program.

Figure 1

The Program Standards System


Standards and Data Elements Measuring Goals and Functions of VR Program
Process for Setting Objectives vis-a-vis the Standards
Management of the VR System
Reporting System to Provide Information
Decision-Support System to Identify Problems and Corrective Actions

Viewed another way, these components work together in a circular fashion to insure that the information generated through the careful application of the standards by program managers is retained within the vocational rehabilitation system for the benefit of future clients. As illustrated in Figure 2, the cycle begins with the agency identifying specific objectives for the system and then developing reliable and valid measures for addressing these objectives. Next, the agency and individual program managers work together in determining the performance goals for each measure. Once the system has been designed and the method for determining success established, the system is then ready to begin operating. Monitoring of the system takes place through the careful implementation of all data collection strategies and through the regular reporting of this data to the funding agency. Having gathered all of the required data, the agency can then begin assessing the extent to which the program's goals were achieved and identifying the reasons behind the program's inability to achieve certain goals. As a result of this analysis and data review, certain changes in the program's policies, procedures, or components may be made to improve the program's overall performance. Such changes are reflected in the agency's setting of new performance goals and the establishment of new operating procedures.

The following discussion explores each of these stages in greater detail and offers specific examples regarding how the revised Program Standards System adheres to this model.

## Identify Objectives and Measures

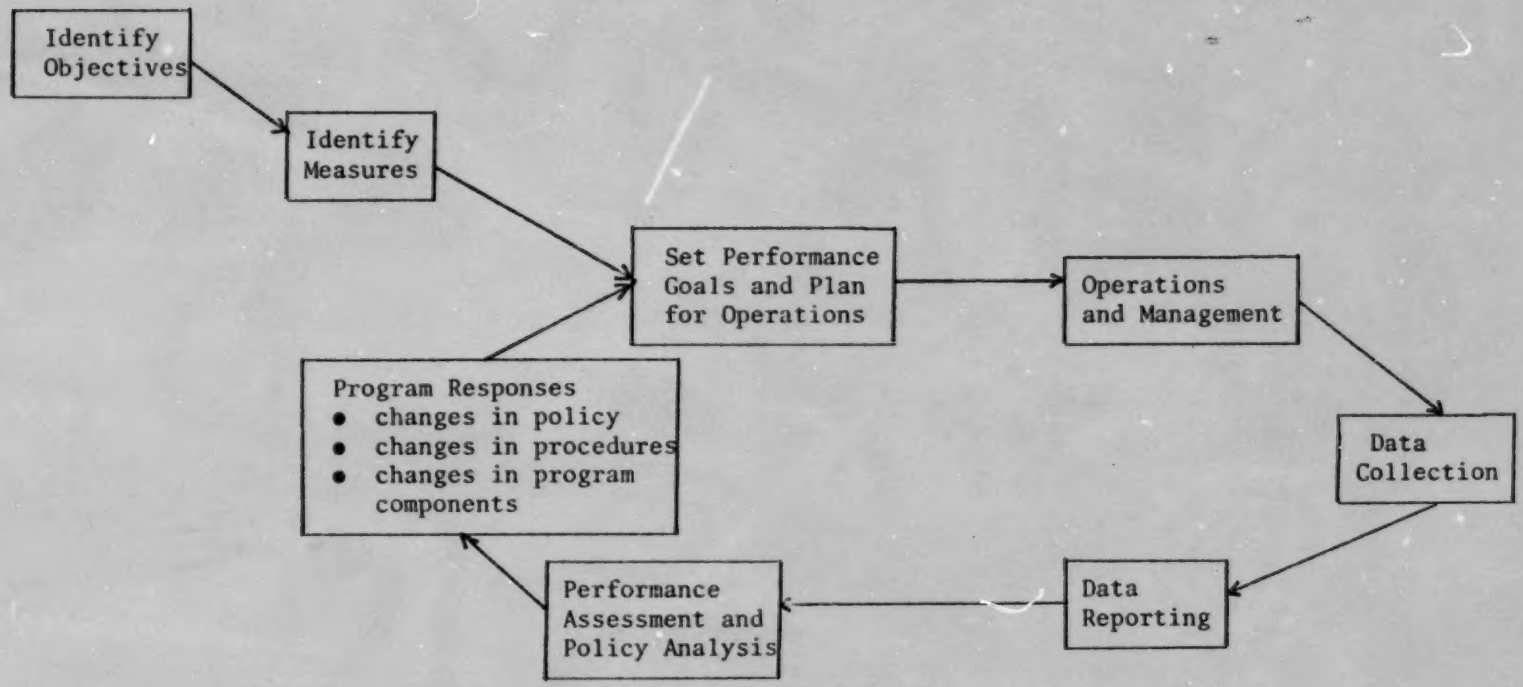
As previously discussed, the objectives of the standards can be summarized into four concepts:

- Coverage: Is the agency adequately addressing the scope and type of needs of its eligible target populations?
- Efficiency: Is the agency sufficiently productive, given the resources available to it?
- Impact: Does the agency help to improve the quality of life of the individual clients it services? Does the agency return more benefits to society (in terms of wages, taxes, and other benefits) than the societal costs it incurs (e.g. tax revenues expended)?

Figure 2

Operating Model for the

Revised Program Standards System



- Compliance: Are elibility decisions made in accordance with the laws and regulations? Are all of the regulations being adequately addressed?

Each of the 13 Program Standards are designed to address one or more of these four broad objectives. In some instances, improvement in one of these areas may come at the expenses of another area. For example, a program may decide to provide services to more clients (i.e. increase coverage), and therefore require greater resources, a decision which may result in the program being less cost-effective. Similarly, efforts to improve impacts may result in an agency spending more resources on each client and consequently, reducing its efficiently level or reducing its ability to serve as many clients (i.e., reduce coverage). These trade-offs occur continuously throughout the life of a program and are influenced by a host of political and service considerations. While these trade-offs may result in various objectives being weighted more heavily than others at a given point in time, such trade-offs do not alter the fact that these four objectives comprise the basic foundation of the standards system.

It is one thing to express a program goal such as "increased economic independence for clients" or "use of resources in a cost-effective manner." It is another thing to specify the measures for such concepts. Criticism of the earlier standards make it apparent that it was the measure rather than the concept of standards or the standards themselves which were found lacking.

To identify the most appropriate data elements for the standards, BPA first reviewed the availabilility of data at the state and federal levels. The VR system has an extensive client-based data system, based upon stage agencies sending data on closed cases to RSA annually, in addition to a number of reports and plans containing aggregate data. To pretest alternative measures, BPA used annual data tapes and other relevant sources to determine which of the possible measures best expressed the intent of the standard, which were most readily constructed from existing data systems, and which would be of most use to program evaluators and administrators.

As an example of the measurement problem and the direction taken for resolution, consider the first performance standard, which relates to coverage:

> "VR SHALL SERVE MAXIMUM PROPORTION OF THE POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE TARGET POPULATION, SUBJECT TO THE LEVEL OF FEDERAL PROGRAM FUNDING AND PRIORITIES AMONG CLIENTS."

A serious methodological problem -- that of estimating those "potentially eligible" for service -- impedes the precise measurement of performance on this standard. No regularly collected population survey indicates the number of individuals with a handicap who has vocational potential nor is it possible to derive these estimates through cross-tabulation or other manipulation of existing surveys.

In spite of the lack of a precise measure for the target population, coverage is an important aspect of performance. Therefore, in the absence of a precise estimate, a coverage "proxy" was identified. Clients served per 100,000 state population. While this measure assumes an equal proportion of disabled across all states (an unlikely situation), it has been broadly used by state and RSA as a measure of coverage. Thus it has practical utility for VR managers, currently. Moreover, if usable estimates of the target population were to become available later, the data elements or measures for the standard could be refined or respecified. So long as the program mission and values remained the same, the standards would remain. However, changes in program knowledge or in data availability or experience with use of the standards might result in changes in the data elements, or even additions to the standards themselves, as measurement problems are resolved.

## Set Performance Goals and Operating Procedures

A major shift in the proposed standards system is for state agencies to set their own objectives, in terms of levels of expected performance by which the state program is to be monitored and "held accountable." The existing standards draw upon central tendency statistics to judge whether a state program performed adequately in the past year. The central tendency statistical approach, while descriptive, did not examine the level of typical

performance with what was reasonable, or desirable, but instead automatically generated "failures" and "successes" among state programs. The more similar state agencies, the more arbitrary the central tendency approach becomes. Finally, because the central tendency approach required the data for all state programs to be available so that the distribution could be calculated, performance "norms" for state programs were dependent upon the timeliness of state submissions of data.

The new system for setting performance objectives places responsibility within each state to set its own objectives for the level of performance to be achieved in an upcoming fiscal year, rather than continuing with the post-hoc system based upon national norms. When setting performance objectives, state agencies might be anticipated to look at their past performance, at the levels of performance being achieved by other state programs that agency staff view as comparable, at the performance nationwide, and at pending changes in state economic conditions, policies on client and service mix, and other unique state factors which might affect performance. RSA may provide technical assistance to the state agency in identifying appropriate levels, and participate in the state's setting of its goals, but the lead and principal responsibility in setting objectives for performance for the coming fiscal year would be with the state agency. The new system recognizes that state agencies best understand the needs of their programs, that there are appropriate differences among state agencies in policy priorities, and that it is the state agency which must accept that there are performance problems or shortfalls if needed improvements are to be identified and implemented.

A particular advantage of this reliance on state agencies to set performance level objectives is that it permits the standards system to be used for monitoring and assessing the ongoing program. State agencies can use their in-house data systems to monitor individual data items on a monthly or quarterly basis, and to see if the program is on target in terms of moving toward annual goals or sustaining acceptable rates of quality closures. Thus, the standards evaluation system can provide much more immediate feedback to program management to lead to improvements in performance.

Eventually, state agencies or RSA will set performance levels that would indicate "poor" performance. In some cases, this would involve a level-setting process that is informed by, but not set by, statistical norms. For example, some data elements might best be set as policy levels, not statistically; it is conceivable that all states could be performing poorly or adequately on a given data element, and that the cue that triggers examination of the problem should not merely result in some subset of states being identified as having a problem if all states have problems. Data elements recommended for performance levels being set by policy makers as opposed to being determined by data include: 1ii (percent severely disabled) 4ii (comparison of mean weekly earnings); 3i (percent closures that are 26); and benefit-cost. Review of past statistics will help in goal-setting. However, BPA strongly urges that the current post hoc statistical norms system not be used by state agencies as the basis for flagging problems. Rather, performance levels should be set to reflect policy goals and be based upon reasonable expectations in light of the state's past performance. Trade-offs between coverage, impact, and efficiency should be explicitly considered in setting state agency goals. While states may use the approach to central tendency for descriptive information and comparison purposes, such statistical procedures should not set the performance levels for the standards, or be the sole basis for state investigation.

Implement the System and Begin Data Collection Efforts

In order to acquire the data necessary to determine the extent to which each state is meeting its performance objectives, uniform data collection procedures must be developed and implemented. As previously discussed, one of the criteria used in determining the data elements for each of the 13 standards was the current availability of the data at both the state and federal level. Building upon the existing R-300 system, BPA developed a number of additional data collection instruments to complement the range of information currently available to RSA through the R-300. The following discussion briefly summarizes the data collection procedures for both the Performance and Procedural Standards.

Performance Standards

The Performance Standards are designed to be calculated each fiscal year. States already have been routinely collecting much of the data required by the Performance Standards. Of the seven separate data sources used for the Performance Standards, three are in reports that have been prepared for RSA historically; or on new report designs:

- the RSA-300 Case Service Report (providing data on individual client outcomes);
- the RSA-2 Annual Report for Vocational Rehabilitation (providing data on aggregate agency expenditures); and
- the RSA-113 Quarterly Cumulative Caseload/Expenditure Report (providing data on the agency's caseload flow).

RSA is currently involved in efforts to revise the RSA-300 and RSA-113 reports, in response to OMB requirements. Because of this, the reader should be aware that the references to specific data items may not correspond to specific forms designs now underway.

The RSA-300 report would need a few additional data items to respond to all the Performance Standards. It has four parts which are completed at different points in the rehabilitation process: at first referral, at completion of the referral process, at completion of the IWRP, and at closure. The information gathered pertains to the clients' work status, disability, primary source of support, the results of their movement through the VR system, and other demographic and personal informaiton.

The RSA-2 has been discontinued by RSA; the report's information was included as part of the proposed RSA-113. However, references to the RSA-2 have been retained in order to show data collectors the type of information required. The precise location of the data (i.e., the report containing the needed information) is irrelevant, as long as the data is accessible from somewhere within the state agency accounting system.

The RSA-113 is a new report created by RSA to gather quarterly information about client flow within each VR agency. It shows how many clients the agency accepted in the previous quarter, how many closures were made during the previous quarter, and the types of closures. As well, the report provides information on the number of applicants and entrants in extended

evaluation; gives projections on new acceptances and rehabilitations; and provides information on expenditures. However, as noted above, the expenditure information is insufficiently detailed for some data elements.

In addition to the three program reports used for the Performance Standards, the standards also call for implementation of two different client surveys:

- the Client Closure Survey (providing information on client satisfaction with VR services); and
- the Client Follow-up Survey (providing information on client retention of benefits).

These two surveys are administered as mail-back surveys, completed by a sample subset of the agency's total group of closed clients for the given fiscal year. The Closure Survey functions as the data source for measuring a client's satisfaction with various aspects of his/her VR services and should be administered as soon as possible after closure from VR. In contrast, the Follow-up Survey is used to measure clients' success in maintaining, over time, the "benefits" resulting from VR service: thus it is concerned with whether or not rehabilitated clients have retained their jobs, earnings levels, freedom from public assistance, and functional abilities. The Follow-up Survey is sent to the client one-year after closure from VR.

Finally, implementation of the Performance Standards will require accessing two "exogenous" data sources:

- the annual U.S. Census publication Statistical Abstract of the U.S. (to provide data on the current federal minimum wage and on state wage norms); and
- the U.S. Bureau of the Census Current Population Reports, Series P-25 (to provide state population estimates).

Any state may prepare the standards data items from state data. If RSA were to prepare the item, states would submit the necessary data to RSA.

Procedural Standards

The Procedural Standards will be reported for a given state agency every third fiscal year. RSA will conduct the data collection and will

report the results to each state agency. The data elements for the Procedural Standards consist of a number of individual information items pertaining to various aspects of the particular issues addressed by a given Procedural Standards. Thus, RSA and state agency program managers will be presented with information on "how things are done" in the agency, with respect to the key processes embodied in the Procedural Standards. It is intended for states to use the Procedural Standards to benefit their program evaluation efforts and facilitate the improvement of services to clients. The information obtained via the Procedural Standards will form the basis for agency decisions to make appropriate changes in practices, where current processes are not in keeping with client interests and positive program performance.

The methodology for implementing the Procedural Standards reflects the desire to allow maximum flexibility to states in the VR process, yet still ensure attention to the areas addressed by the Procedural Standards and provide sufficient data in these areas to allow for program-wide analysis. Ideally, a uniform procedure would be followed by all states for monitoring these process areas, even though states retain differences in the ways they organize and conduct case service delivery. Indicators of compliance with legal requirements, such as eligibility and IWRP, should be the same for all states; that is, the same questions should be asked and the same summary data should be reported.

Most of the needs of the Procedural Standards are best met through case review. Thus, a single case review process will be implemented to address the case review needs of four of the Procedural Standards. This process will use the Case Review Schedule (CRS), developed by the San Diego State RCEP IX, as the basic document for Procedural Standards data collection. The CRS has already been mandated by RSA as the standardized instrument to be used by regional RSA offices whenever they conduct case reviews. For Procedural Standards 10 (eligibility) and 12 (IWRP), the CRS items essential to adequately assess compliance have been selected. These items make up the Modified Case Review Schedule (MCRS), which is considerably shorter than the full CRS. RSA could choose either the CRS or the MCRS as the instrument for collecting Procedural Standards data.

While the CRS is an appropriate vehicle for collecting compliance data, it lacks certain items needed to assess the validity of R-300 data (Standard 9) or to assess timeliness of case service (Standard 11). For these standards, two separate instruments have been developed to complement the CRS. These two instruments have been incorporated directly into the MCRS to provide a unified data collection instrument.

Finally, Standard 13, on the correspondence between the IWRP occupational goals and final outcomes, uses data from the R-300 and consequently can be reported annually.

Data Reporting

The standards reporting system brings together the various sources of standards input data so that a particular agency's attainment for a specific time period can be compared to its objectives for the period. In addition, the reporting system will provide the program managers with the capability to flag and investigate problematic attainment. To do these two things, the reporting system has been designed:

- to keep track of past performance as well as current expectations;
- to present the findings in an easy to use, easy to understand way, without unwieldy reports, emphasizing graphical presentations as well as plain numbers; and
- to make sure that the reporting of results occurs in a timely fashion, so that future performance can be influenced.

The standards system is compatible with the kinds of data compilations routinely generated even now in many state agencies' internal information systems. Thus, the evaluation standards system could be adapted by individual state agencies for their use; the calculation of national norms will require a national data system.

Tables 2, 3, and 4 illustrate the main reports in the Performance Standards system. The first set of reports (one state's example is seen in Table 2) will show achievement on each of the standards for a given agency. In addition to showing this year's performance, the table also will show the state's goal for the year, its last year's performance, and the previous year's national norm. With this information agencies can see how successful they were in meeting their goals for each of the data elements.

Table 2

ACHIEVEMENT ON PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

YEAR: 1981

STATE: CALIFORNIA

| | | THIS YEAR | THIS YEARS GOAL | 1980 | 1980 NATL NORM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. COVERAGE | | | | | |
| (i) | Clients served per 100,000 population | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| (ii) | Percent severely disabled served | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| 2. COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND BENEFIT COST RETURN | | | | | |
| (i) | Expenditures per competitively employed closure | $XX,XXX | $XX,XXX | $XX,XXX | $XX,XXX |
| (ii) | Expenditure per 26 closure | $XX,XXX | $XX,XXX | $XX,XXX | $XX,XXX |
| (iii) | Ratio of total VR benefits to total VR costs | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| (iv) | Total net benefit from VR services | XXXX.X | XXXX.X | XXXX.X | XXXX.X |
| 3. REHABILITATION RATE | | | | | |
| (i) | Percent 26 closures | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| (ii) | Annual change in number of 26 closures | XXXX | XXXX | XXXX | XXXX |
| 4. ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE | | | | | |
| (i) | Percent 26 closures with weekly earnings at/above federal minimum wage | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| (ii) | Comparison of earnings of competitively employed 26 closures to earnings of employees in state | X.XX | X.XX | X.XX | X.XX |
| 5. GAINFUL ACTIVITY | | | | | |
| (i) | Percent 26 closures competitively employed | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.X |
| (ii) | Percent competitively employed 26 closures with hourly earnings at/above federal minimum wage | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| (iii) | Percent noncompetitively employed 26 closures showing improvement in functioning and life status | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |

Table 2

ACHIEVEMENT ON PERFORMANCE STANDARDS (cont.)

YEAR: 198.

STATE: CALIFORNIA

| | THIS YEAR | THIS YEARS GOAL | 1980 | 1980 NATL NORM |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. CLIENT CHANGE | | | | |
| (i) Comparison of earnings before and after VR services | $XXXX.XX | $XXXX.XX | $XXXX.XX | $XXXX.XX |
| (ii) Changes in other statuses and functioning ability | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| 7. RETENTION | | | | |
| (i) Percent 26 closures retaining earnings at follow-up | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| (ii) Comparison of 26 closures with public assistance as primary source of support at closure and at follow-up | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| (iii) Percent noncompetitively employed 26 closures retaining closure skills at follow-up | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| 8. SATISFACTION | | | | |
| (i) Percent closed clients satisfied with overall VR experience | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| (ii) Percent closed clients satisfied with: | | | | |
| counselor | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| physical restoration | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| job training services | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| placement services | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| (iii) Percent 26 Closures judging services received as useful in obtaining their job/ homemaker situation or in current performance | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |

They can also compare this year's performance with last year's to see where they have and have not improved. Finally, agencies can assess their current performance in relation to recent national norms. This type of report gives program managers an overall view of agency performance, while at the same time pointing out specific strengths and weaknesses, currently and over time. A particular advantage of such reports is that their "turnaround" time can be relatively short. The short turnaround time is possible because the reports use only the individual agency's data (and a previous year's national norm). Computing the current year's national or regional norms requires data submissions from all relevant states. Thus, production time for reports like that shown in Table 2 will be a function primarily of the agency's own data preparation.

In addition, reports could be prepared for each data element which will display all agencies performance on each particular element. Table 3 shows an example for data element 1(i). This year's goal as well as performance in the four previous years will be presented. Agencies can use the information to compare their performance and their goals to other similar agencies. By providing data for the four previous years, trends over time can be analyzed. Agencies and RSA will be able to determine if performance has steadily improved over time or if this year's performance is noticeably different than previous years.

Finally, Table 4 shows an example report of national performance for each data element for all agencies, and for general, combined, and blind agencies. This allows a program-wide view of performance in VR.

These three types of reports will be generated routinely for all of the agencies and all of the data elements. In addition, RSA and the agencies will have the capability to use the system to generate special purpose reports and analyses. For example, the basic reports could be run separately for special population. These may take the form of statistical reports or of graphic displays.

Finally, the system will provide access to a large number of supporting information items useful in analyzing the interpreting the routine reports. These information items feed into the decision support system, discussed earlier. Based on any problems which emerge in the agency's standards performance, program managers will inspect particular information items keyed to the various standards data elements.

Table 3

ACHIEVEMENT ON PERFORMANCE STANDARDS: STATE COMPARISON

GENERAL AND COMBINED AGENCIES

STANDARD: 1. COVERAGE

DATA ELEMENT: (1) Clients Served per 100,000 Population

NATIONAL NORM: XXX.X

| AGENCY | THIS YEAR | THIS YEARS GOAL | 1980 | 1979 | 1978 | 1977 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ALABAMA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| ALASKA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| ARIZONA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| ARKANSAS | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| CALIFORNIA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| COLORADO | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| CONNECTICUT | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| DELAWARE | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| DIST. OF COLUMBIA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| FLORIDA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| GEORGIA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| GUAM | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| HAWAII | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| IDAHO | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| ILLINOIS | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| INDIANA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| IOWA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| KANSAS | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| KENTUCKY | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| LOUISIANA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| MAINE | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| MARYLAND | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| MASSACHUSETTS | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| MICHIGAN | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| MINNESOTA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| MISSISSIPPI | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| MISSOURI | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |

Table 3 (continued)

ACHIEVEMENT ON PERFORMANCE STANDARDS: STATE COMPARISON (cont.)

GENERAL AND COMBINED AGENCIES

STANDARD: 1. COVERAGE

DATA ELEMENT: (i) Clients Served per 100,000 Population

NATIONAL NORM: XXX.X

| AGENCY | THIS YEAR | THIS YEARS GOAL | 1980 | 1979 | 1978 | 1977 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MONTANA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| NEBRASKA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| NEVADA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| NEW HAMPSHIRE | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| NEW JERSEY | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| NEW MEXICO | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| NEW YORK | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| NORTH CAROLINA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| NORTH DAKOTA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| OHIO | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| OKLAHOMA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| OREGON | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| PENNSYLVANIA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| PUERTO RICO | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| RHODE ISLAND | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| SOUTH CAROLINA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| SOUTH DAKOTA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| TENNESSEE | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| TEXAS | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| UTAH | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| VERMONT | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| VIRGINIA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| WASHINGTON | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| WEST VIRGINIA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| WISCONSIN | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| WYOMING | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| VIRGIN ISLANDS | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |

Table 3 (continued)

ACHIEVEMENT ON PERFORMANCE STANDARDS: STATE COMPARISON

BLIND AGENCIES

STANDARD: 1. COVERAGE
DATA ELEMENT: (1) Clients Served per 100,000 Population
NATIONAL NORM: XXX.X

| AGENCY | THIS YEAR | THIS YEARS GOAL | 1980 | 1979 | 1978 | 1977 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CONNECTICUT | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| DELAWARE | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| FLORIDA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| IDAHO | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| IOWA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| KANSAS | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| KENTUCKY | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| MASSACHUSETTS | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| MICHIGAN | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| MINNESOTA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| MISSISSIPPI | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| MISSOURI | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| MONTANA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| NEBRASKA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| NEW JERSEY | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| NEW YORK | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| NORTH CAROLINA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| OREGON | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| PENNSYLVANIA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| RHODE ISLAND | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| SOUTH CAROLINA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| TENNESSEE | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| TEXAS | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| UTAH | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| VERMONT | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| VIRGINIA | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| WASHINGTON | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |

Table 4

ACHIEVEMENT ON PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

ALL AGENCIES

YEAR: 1981

| | NATL NORM | GEN-ERAL | BLIND | COM-BINED |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. COVERAGE | | | | |
| (i) Clients served per 100,000 population | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| (ii) Percent severely disabled served | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| 2. COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND BENEFIT COST RETURN | | | | |
| (i) Expenditures per competitively employed closure | $XX,XXX | $XX,XXX | $XX,XXX | $XX,XXX |
| (ii) Expenditure per 26 closure | $XX,XXX | $XX,XXX | $XX,XXX | $XX,XXX |
| (iii) Ratio of total VR benefits to total VR costs | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| (iv) Total net benefit from VR services | XXXX.X | XXXX.X | XXXX.X | XXXX.X |
| 3. REHABILITATION RATE | | | | |
| (i) Percent 26 closures | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| (ii) Annual change in number of 26 closures | XXXX | XXXX | XXXX | XXXX |
| 4. ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE | | | | |
| (i) Percent 26 closures with weekly earnings at/above federal minimum wage | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| (ii) Comparison of earnings of competitively employed 26 closures to earnings of employees in state | X.XX | X.XX | X.XX | X.XX |
| 5. GAINFUL ACTIVITY | | | | |
| (i) Percent 26 closures competitively employed | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.X |
| (ii) Percent competitively employed 26 closures with hourly earnings at/above federal minimum wage | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| (iii) Percent noncompetitively employed 26 closures showing improvement in functioning and life status | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |

Table 4 (continued)

ACHIEVEMENT ON PERFORMANCE STANDARDS (cont.)

ALL AGENCIES

YEAR: 1981

| | NATL NORM | GEN-ERAL | BLIND | COM-BINE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. CLIENT CHANGE | | | | |
| (i) Comparison of earnings before and after VR services | $XXXX.XX | $XXXX.XX | $XXXX.XX | $XXXX.X |
| (ii) Changes in other statuses and functioning ability | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X | XXX.X |
| 7. RETENTION | | | | |
| (i) Percent 26 closures retaining earnings at follow-up | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.X |
| (ii) Comparison of 26 closures with public assistance as primary source of support at closure and at follow-up | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.X |
| (iii) Percent noncompetitively employed 26 closures retaining closure skills at follow-up | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.X |
| 8. SATISFACTION | | | | |
| (i) Percent closed clients satisfied with overall VR experience | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |
| (ii) Percent closed clients satisfied with: | | | | |
| counselor | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.X |
| physical restoration | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.X |
| job training services | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.X |
| placement services | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.X |
| (iii) Percent 26 closures rating services received as useful in obtaining their job/ homemaker situation or in current performance | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX | XX.XX |

## Performance Assessment and Policy Analysis

Out of the standards reporting system will come the clear indication that some agencies will not have met their objectives for level of attainment on some data elements. The standards system does not stop there, however, but instead provides a system for investigating the causes for problematic attainment and for developing corrective actions as part of the decision-support system. This system is described in detail in the Analytic Paradigm for the VR Program Standards,[1] but can be illustrated briefly here. Basically, the decision-support system is designed to provide VR program managers with information which is:

- relevant to the issues (i.e., problems) under consideration;
- quickly and easily interpretable;
- timely; and
- suggestive either of an immediate policy response to the problem, or of further investigation needed before an appropriate response can be formulated.

The basic flow of the decision-support system is shown in Figure 3. Problematic attainment, where an agency is unable to meet its agreed-upon objective for a particular standard data element, is the signal for the process to start. First, program managers within RSA and within the state VR agencies investigate the problematic attainment. If they are able to identify problems and possible corrective actions, then implementation is the next step. If not, then more formal evaluation research is called for. Implementation of the corrective actions will affect state VR agency operations in the next cycle of the standards system. As a result of the corrective actions, the agency may be able to meet its objectives. Otherwise, the cycle starts anew.

As noted, the investigation of problematic attainment has been broken into two parts:

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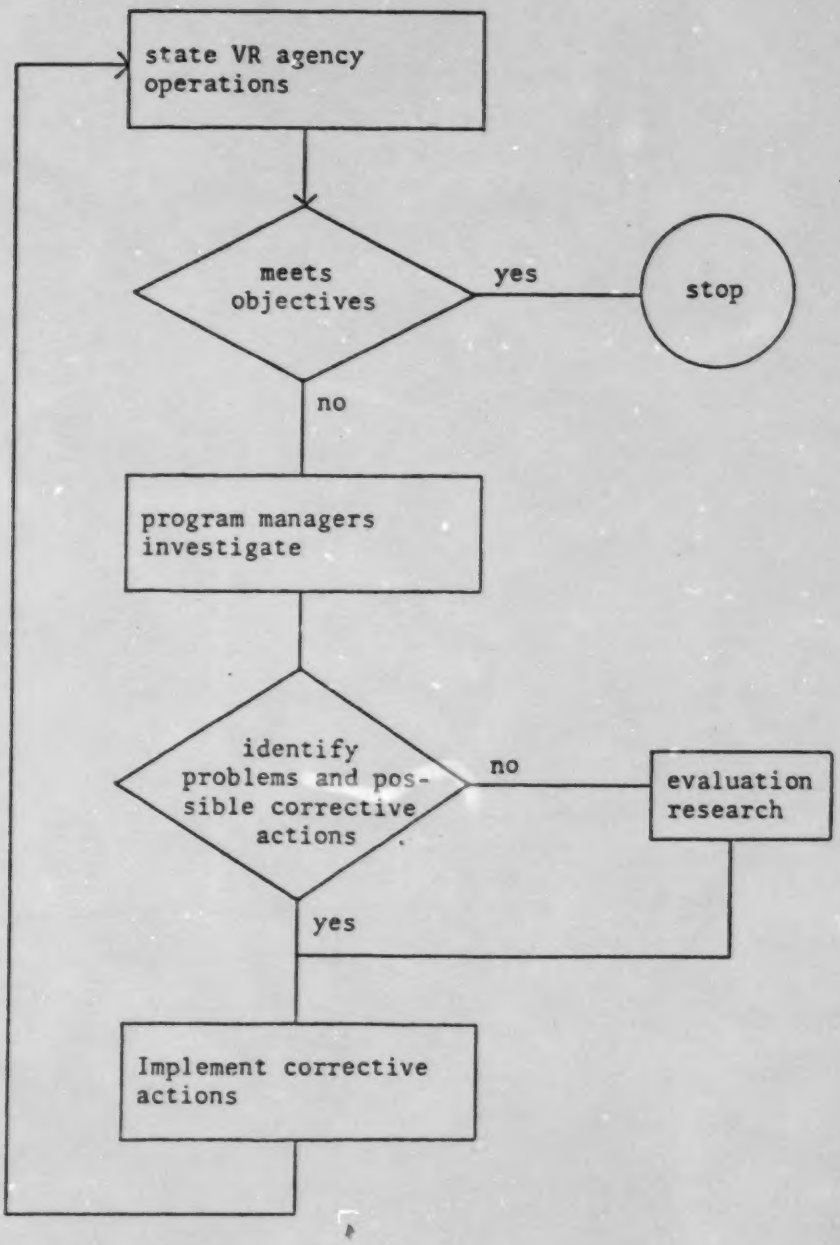
[1] Berkeley Planning Associates, Program Standards Evaluation System, Final Report Volume II, Analytic Paradigm for the VR Program Standards. This report is available from RSA.

Figure 3

The Flow of the Decision-Support System



- basic problem identification, carried out by program managers within RSA and within the state VR agencies, using the standards reporting system plus the managers' knowledge of program operations; and
- evaluation research, carried out by evaluation researchers within RSA or within the state VR agencies, or by outside consultants, existing data bases as well as new data collection.

These two parts differ in who carries them out, but especially to the extent that the basic problem identification occurs in a timely fashion, using the reporting system and the MIS. If evaluation research is required, then most likely corrective actions will not be possible in time for the next cycle of the process. In fact, the results of the evaluation research may not be available for a year or more, given the nature of evaluation research. This lag is the reasons that the investigation of problematic attainment is broken into two parts, so that timely corrective actions can be taken, if possible.

The Process of Problem Identification

The process of problem identification outlined below is to be carried out by program managers, within RSA and within state VR agencies. The information for the problem identification will come from the standards reporting system, as well as from the managers' knowledge of program operations. The process consists of tracing the possible problems by first organizing the components of the standard, then examining as "second-level" indicators other data elements and other informational elements of the reporting system. Examination of these will then lead to further examination of third-level indicators, and so on. At any point in tracing out these indicators the problem may be identified to the manager's satisfaction. At that point, corrective action is formulated. Or, at any point in tracing out these problems, further analysis in the form of evaluation research may be required. This process is like

that normally illustrated by a decision tree. Of course, the process of problem identification may lead down several paths at once. Also, more than two paths may need investigation from a particular node, or more than three levels of indicators may have to be examined. The point is to do the analytical thinking and utilize existing information to identify possible problems and corrective actions. This process is illustrated in Figure 4.

If a data element shows problematic attainment, the first level of analysis is to examine the components of the element, dissecting the ratio or measure into its separate parts, to pinpoint the areas needing attention. For example, if the numerical value of a ratio is too large, the problem may be in the numerator (too large), the denominator (too small), or both. Comparison of attainment on the data elements or their components with that of other agencies with similar programs, or historically, or on other data items, can help determine the extent to which the indicator shows a real problem or if there is a good explanation for the attainment. The goal in this analysis is to seek explanation, or the identification of which components or related measures pinpoint the areas to be explored further. This analytical process may take several iterations before a cause is pinpointed. The first levels of the process are not to be seen as complex statistical analysis problems, but rather straightforward, simple program comparisons that allow VR managers to progress through a decision tree, diagnosing problems and using program information to reach conclusions about probable causes. Some branches of a decision tree process may lead to problems or investigations that require complex statistical analyses, but only after several levels of the process have occurred.

Table 5 shows the decision steps in an example exploration; this is a model for investigating the possible causes or problems if "expenditures per 26 closure", data element 2(ii), is problematic.[1]

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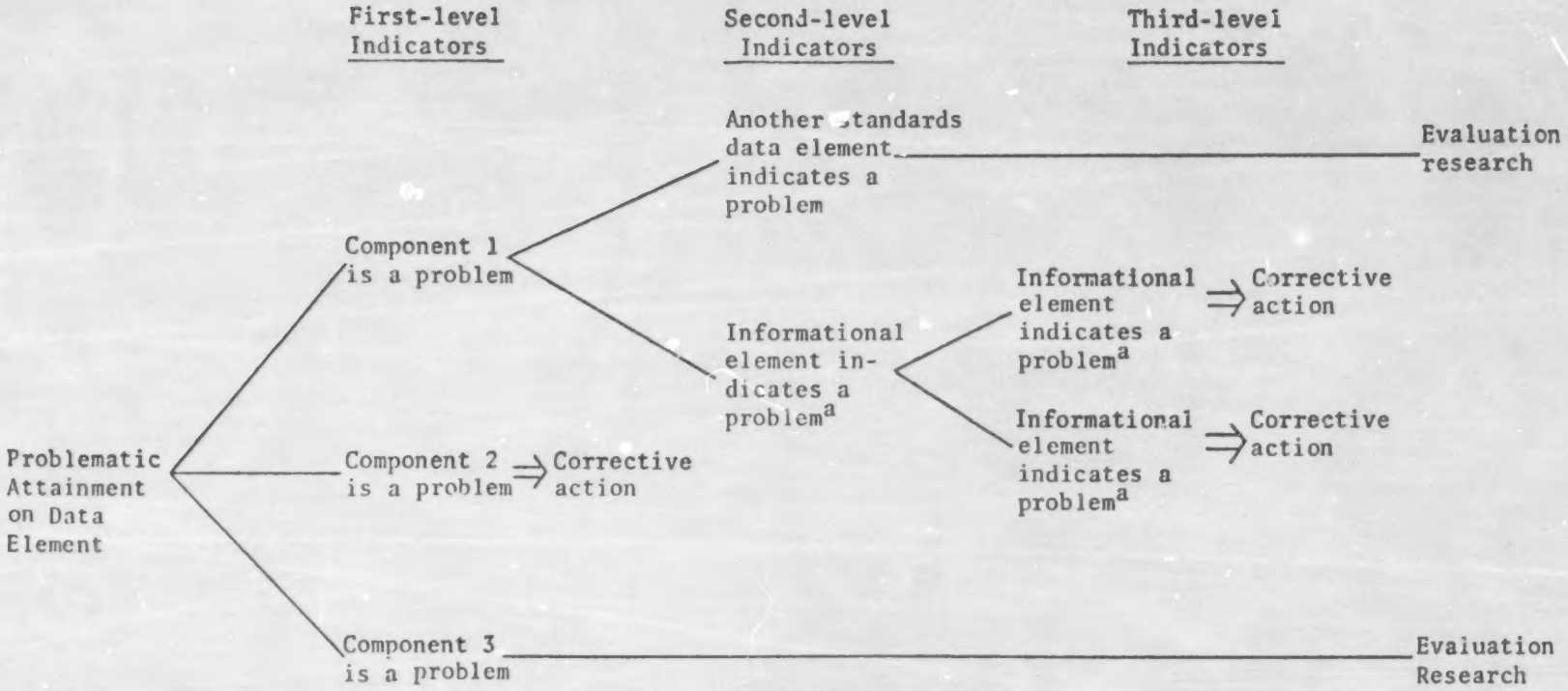
[1]The Analytic Paradigm provides similar decision trees for other Performance Standards data elements.

Figure 4

Process of Problem Identification




[a]An "informational element" is a piece of data that comes from the MIS or other reporting system, but is not a standards data element.

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Table 5

Investigating Inadequate Performance on Data Element 2(ii):
Expenditures per 26 Closure

| Scenario | First Level Indicators: Cost/Closure | First Level Indicators: Cost/Case | Implications of First Level Indicators | Second Level Indicators | "Leading Questions" (and answer) | Third Level Indicators (if applicable) | Research Questions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Acceptable | Acceptable | Agency is achieving too low a proportion of 26 closures | Standards Data Element 3(i) (#26 / #26+#28+#30) | Is the % too low? If yes, why? | None (go to next column) | Conduct Outcomes Analysis |
| | | | | | If no, which clients or components cost too much? | [illegible]eration [illegible] | 1. What proportion of total costs go to administration? |
| | | | | | | ervice costs to:<br>-- 26s<br>-- 28s and 30s<br>-- 08s<br>(from the MIS) | 2. What is the average life-of-case cost for each closure group?<br>3. What proportion of total life-of-case costs are spent on each closure group? |
| | | | | | | • Service costs by service type | 1. What proportion of current service costs went to each service type?<br>2. What is the average cost of each service type, for clients receiving that service? |
| 2 | Unacceptable | Acceptable | Agency is serving clients too slowly: achieving too few closures | MIS element: Post-Acceptance Closure Rate (#26+#28+#30 / # open cases) | 1. Is the service process too slow? | 1. Timeliness 10-12/12-24 R-300 item 3,M,2: Average time from acceptance to closure (10-24) | Which aspect of services for accepted clients takes relatively too long? |
| | | | | | 2. Have we had a recent influx of acceptances? | MIS element: rate of acceptance | None (end of investigation) |
| 3 | Acceptable | Unacceptable | Agency has recently developed a bottleneck in intake process: too few clients being accepted into the system | 1. Standards Data Element 1(ii) (# served (10-30) / 100,000 population)<br>2. MIS element: Rate of Acceptance (# of new status 10s / # new applicants + # on-hand applicants + # on-hand 06s) | 1. Do we have too few applicants? | # of applicants (From RSA-101) | Could outreach be made more effective? |
| | | | | | 2. Does use of Extended Evaluation account for the low acceptance rate? | 1. R-300 item 3MI TIP06 (06 takes too long) | 1. What kinds of clients are going into 06?<br>2. What kinds of services are provided during 06? |
| | | | | | | 2. MIS element: % 02 => 06 (too many enter 06) | |
| | | | | | 3. Do we have too many ineligible applicants? | MIS elements: 02 => 08 and 06 => 08 | 1. What reasons are given for closing clients ineligible?<br>2. From where are these clients being referred? |

The column headed "first level indicators" shows four possible combinations of two other indicators, cost/closure and cost/case, which are used to investigate an unacceptable (high) value of data element 2(ii). Depending on acceptable or unacceptable levels of these indicators, a different "scenario," or type of problem, is identified. For instance, if both of these indicators are "acceptable," then this indicates that the agency is achieving a proportion of 26 closures which is too low. This can be confirmed by referring to data element 3(i). If cost/closure is unacceptable, but the cost/case is acceptable, then the agency is achieving too few closures. As can be seen here, this first-level diagnosis leads to in-depth investigation of different parts of the system. The table shows the types of second- and third-level questions that could be pursued, depending on the initial comparisons and explanation.

At each level of the investigation, the goal should be to quickly and more finely tune in on the precise nature (i.e., cause) of the problem. Depending on the findings generated by a given level of the analysis, the program manager may decide either: that further investigation is warranted before formulating a policy response; that the findings are adequate to suggest an appropriate response; or that, despite the adequacy of the findings, no useful policy response can be offered (e.g., due to prior institutional, legislative, or funding constraints).

The indicators used in the investigation of problematic attainment are grouped and sequenced in such a way as to answer increasingly detailed questions. This allows managers to go a fair distance in determining the nature of the problem before needing recourse to more sophisticated and time-consuming "causal" analyses. This is <u>not</u> to say that other sophisticated analyses are undesirable or unnecessary. On the contrary, they as often as not may prove useful to managers in pinpointing precise causes of problem performance. However, the advantage of this model is that it allows managers to quickly investigate and discard certain hypothesis regarding the problem's cause, and therefore to more quickly direct the investigation toward what seems to be the likely cause. Once the likely cause is identified through use of the indicators, the manager can direct the evaluation/research staff to conduct the needed causal analysis.

Evaluation Research

As noted above, corrective actions may not always result from the problem identification procedure. Instead, the program manager may need to conduct "causal" evaluation research and program analyses to determine the source of program performance problems. These (often multivariate) analyses control for various state factors which simultaneously influence performance. Such research often examines the VR program as an interrelated system of activities and may require special data collection.

Program Response

The key to effectively using the standards system as a management tool will rest with the ability of RSA and the states to incorporate new procedures or policies which may emerge from the careful analysis and review of the standards' data. These changes may involve policy decisions; federal and state congressional legislation and regulations; resource committment adjustments; data system revisions; technical assistance to the states; research agendas; university counselor training programs; and coordination with other programs. The primary actors with responsibility for making changes in the standards system are the same as in the VR system at large: Congress, OMB, Department of Education, RSA, Regional Offices of Rehabilitation Services, state governments, and state VR agencies. The set of actors and associated types of corrective action include:

- Congress, OMB, Department of Education: Funding levels, allocation formulas, priorities to client groups, procedural requirements;
- RSA: Regulations, monitoring, evaluation, Research (along with NIHR), program development, guidance materials, training programs, demonstrations;
- Regional ORS: Technical assistance to state VR agencies, dissemination of information, diffusion of innovations, training;
- State governments: funding levels; and
- State VR Agencies: same as RSA (e.g., regulations, evaluation), eligibility determination changes, counselor training, case management changes, service provision changes, management of sub-units (e.g., districts, offices).

## Evaluating the Standards System Over Time

One of the problems with the current standards system is that no evaluation of the use of the standards is included. For the revised standards system, such evaluation is clearly included.

The criteria for evaluating the revised standards system are very simple. The most important evaluative criterion is whether the attainment of the state VR agencies is improving, in the areas measured by the standards data elements. While it may be very difficult to prove that the cause of the improvement was the implementation of the standards, at least the attainment of the agencies after the implementation can be compared to their attainment before the implementation. The second evaluation criterion is whether the state VR agencies are meeting their objectives. If they never meet their objectives, then the objective setting process is not working properly. If they always meet their objectives, then the process is also not working properly. Identifying for which state VR agencies, for which data elements, or, for both in combination, which objectives are not being met will indicate where attention needs to be paid in the standards system. The third evaluative criterion is whether the program managers find the system useful. Program managers should be regularly canvassed for their recommendations.

## Changing the Standards System

A key word for the standards system should be flexibility. As the standards system operates, several factors outside the system may change:

- the goals and functions of the VR program may change, necessitating changes in the standards;
- reporting requirements within or without VR may change, changing what will be available for the reporting system;
- the actors and types of corrective actions possibly may change;
- actions taken by state VR agencies might push the VR program in undesirable directions, as state program managers try to respond to the standards system, thus requiring additional standards or changed expectations; and
- the achievement of the state VR agencies may not be improving over time.

A number of factors inside the system may need change:

- some data elements may be found to have lower data quality than is acceptable, and thus require new procedures or even replacement;
- some of the data collection activities may require change, because of logistical problems;
- difficulties in the reporting system and in the reporting cycle may arise; and
- objectives being set may not be correct.

As such, RSA must monitor the operation of the standards system over time. In the beginning, the system should especially be closely monitored, so that problems can be discovered early, and RSA must be ready to change the standards system as the need arises.

# Vocational Rehabilitation Program
# Standards Evaluation System

## Trainee Handbook-B:

## Computing and Presenting
## The Eight Performance Standards

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UC 64

# COMPUTING AND PRESENTING THE EIGHT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

## OVERVIEW

The Performance Standards consist of eight goal statements for the VR program, and data elements to be used in measuring achievement of those goals. The Performance Standards focus on outputs of the VR program: that is, on client outcomes and agency productivity. They provide measures of an agency's level of coverage of the eligible population, efficiency in service provision, and impact on clients' lives.

States already routinely collect much of the data required by the Performance Standards. Of the seven separate data sources used for the Performance Standards, three have been in use or recently designed by RSA:

- the RSA-300 Case Service Report (providing data on individual client outcomes);
- the RSA-2 Annual Report for Vocational Rehabilitation (providing data on aggregated agency expenditures); and
- the RSA-113 Quarterly Cumulative Caseload/Expenditure Report (providing data on the agency's caseload flow).

The RSA-300 report has been expanded to provide certain additional data needs required by the Performance Standards. It has four parts which are completed at different points in the rehabilitation process: at first referral, at completion of the referral process, at completion of the IWRP, and at closure. The information gathered pertains to the clients' work status, disability, primary source of support, the results of their movement through the VR system, and other demographic and personal information.

The RSA-2 has been discontinued by RSA, and the report's information is part of the proposed RSA-113. However, we retain a reference to the RSA-2 because the RSA-113 financial information is insufficiently detailed for the benefit-cost data elements. Our concern is to show data collectors the type of information required; thus we include the RSA-2 to illustrate the specific information needed. The precise location of the data (i.e., the report containing the needed information) is irrelevant, as long as the data is accessible from somewhere within the state agency accounting system.

The RSA-113 is a new report created by RSA to gather quarterly information about client flow within each VR agency. It shows how many clients the agency accepted in the previous quarter, how many closures were made during the previous quarter, and the types of closures. As well, the report provides information on the number of applicants and entrants in extended evaluation; gives projections on new acceptances and rehabilitations; and provides information on expenditures. However, as noted above, the expenditure information is insufficiently detailed for some data elements.

In addition to the three program reports used for the Performance Standards, these standards will also require implementation of two different client surveys:

- the Client Closure Survey (providing information on client satisfaction with VR services); and
- the Client Follow-up Survey (providing information on client retention of benefits).

These two surveys are administered as mail-back surveys, completed by a sample of the agency's total group of closed clients for a given fiscal year. The Closure Survey functions as the data source for measuring a client's satisfaction with various aspects of his/her VR services. In order to tap the person's opinions while the VR experience is still "fresh in mind," the survey must be administered as soon as possible after closure from VR. In contrast, the Follow-up Survey is used to measure clients' success in maintaining, over time, the "benefits" resulting from VR service: thus it is concerned with whether or not rehabilitated clients have retained their jobs, earnings levels, freedom from public assistance, and functional abilities. The Follow-up Survey is sent to the client one year after closure from VR.

Finally, implementation of the Performance Standards will require accessing two "exogenous" data sources:

- the annual U.S. Census publication Statistical Abstract of the U.S. (to provide data on the current federal minimum wage and on state wage norms); and
- The U.S. Bureau of the Census Current Population Reports, Series P-25 (to provide state population estimates).

Each of these data sources will be accessed by RSA, and RSA will input the required data into the MIS for computing of the relevant data elements.

INSTRUCTION FOR COMPUTING THE DATA ELEMENTS

STANDARD 1: VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SHALL SERVE THE MAXIMUM PROPORTION OF THE POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE TARGET POPULATION, SUBJECT TO THE LEVEL OF FEDERAL PROGRAM FUNDING AND PRIORITIES AMONG CLIENTS.

Data Elements: (i) Clients served per 100,000 population
(ii) Percent of clients severely disabled

This standard addresses the extent to which the vocational rehabilitation program is serving the eligible target population. The need to ensure accessibility of services to all the eligible disabled is of paramount importance to RSA and the states.

Data Element 1(i): Clients served per 100,000 population

Rationale

Although this data element does not provide a true estimate of the level of coverage of the eligible target population, it provides an adequate proxy measure of the target population in terms of the total state population. Also, the data item is currently used by state agencies and, therefore, has management utility and validity as a performance measure.

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Annual number of clients}}{\text{State population (in 100,000's)}}$$

Data Sources

- RSA-113
- U.S. Bureau of the Census, Series P-25

Data Element 1(ii): Percent of clients severely disabled

Rationale

The proportion of severely disabled within a caseload can reasonably be expected to impact negatively upon a state agency's caseload size and on its total costs. With a high proportion of severely disabled clients, time in

process would be expected to increase and counselor capacity decrease, thus decreasing a program's overall caseload capacity. To effectively assess coverage, the proportion of the caseload that is severely disabled must be taken into account. Further, given the legislative importance attached to service to severely disabled, it is most appropriate to include this data element under the standard on coverage of the eligible client population.

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Annual number of severely disabled clients served}}{\text{Annual number of clients served}}$$

Data Sources

- RSA-113

STANDARD 2: THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM SHALL USE RESOURCES IN A COST-EFFECTIVE MANNER AND SHOW A POSITIVE RETURN TO SOCIETY OF INVESTMENT IN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION OF DISABLED CLIENTS.

Data Elements:
(i) Expenditures per competitively employed 26 closure
(ii) Expenditure per 26 closure
(iii) Ratio of total VR benefits to total VR costs (benefit-cost ratio)
(iv) Total net benefit from VR services (discounted net present value)

Two issues are addressed by this standard. The first is the issue of cost-effectiveness: with the financial resources available to the state, how successfully did it achieve desired objectives? The second issue revolves around cost-benefit concerns: are we getting more out of the program than we put in?

Data Element 2(i): Expenditure per competitively employed 26 closure

Rationale

This data element compares total agency expenditures to the number of competitively employed 26 closures. It applies the most stringent criteria to the measurement of cost-effectiveness by focusing on only those 26 closures who are competitively employed at the time services terminate. While

this data element closely parallels element 2(ii) (expenditure per 26 closure), it is included because of the long-standing consensus that competitive employment is the highest quality and most desirable type of closure obtainable.

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Total agency expenditures}}{\text{Number of competitively employed 26 closures}}$$

Data Sources

- RSA-2
- RSA-300

Data Element 2(ii): Expenditure per 26 closure

Rationale

This cost-effectiveness measure relaxes the measurement criteria, assessing value to all types of rehabilitations. It recognizes that some clients are not capable of achieving competitive employment and that other employment outcomes can represent achievement commensurate with these clients' abilities. This data element compares total agency expenditures to all 26 closures, thus capturing the effect of gainful activity, whether it lies in the realm of competitive or noncompetitive employment.

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Total agency expenditures}}{\text{Number of 26 closures}}$$

Data Sources

- RSA-2
- RSA-300

Data Elements 2(iii) and (iv):

(iii) Ratio of total VR benefits to total VR costs (Benefit-Cost ratio)

(iv) Net total benefit from VR services (Discounted net present value)

Rationale

Because these two data elements are very similar in concept, they will be discussed together. Benefit-cost modeling of social service delivery systems currently enjoys wide acceptance as a measurement tool, with usage extending far beyond the VR field. The figures provided by benefit-cost analysis yield a single number which is an immediate indicator of program success. Unlike cost-effectiveness measures, which determine the unit costs for achieving a given objective (such as costs per competitive closure), benefit-cost models estimate total benefits and total costs in terms of dollars. These models are neutral with regard to type of delivery strategy. As such, they do not penalize agencies which choose to spend more per client in order to produce better results. Because of their surface simplicity, and because they are a popular sophisticated analytic tool for evaluating program worth, benefit-cost measures of the VR system are included in the Performance Standards.

As a review for the National Science Foundation has noted, benefit-cost applications in the VR field are more extensive and have generally been more sophisticated (or at least at a higher level of technical quality) than in most other social service and manpower program areas.[1] There are a number of models available for us. In one case, RSA commissioned the development of a model for routine use by the program, which was designed to be adaptable to the needs of many users (i.e., state agencies, RSA contracted evaluation studies, RSA itself) and to be capable of periodic updating and refinement as new data became available. That model, developed at the University of California, Berkeley, and subsequently refined by BPA staff, has been used by RSA, several state agencies, the Urban Institute, Abt Associates, National Analysts, and Greenleigh Associates, among others, usually under RSA recommendation.[2]

[1] Berkowitz and Anderson, PADEC -- An Evaluation of an Experimental Rehabilitation Project, Rutgers University, 1974.

[2] Frederick C. Collignon and Richard Dodson, Benefit-Cost Analysis of Vocational Rehabilitation Services Provided to Individuals Most Severely Handicapped (ISMH), April 1975.

This model is the basis for the two data elements proposed for use in measuring benefits in relation to costs in terms of:

- a ratio $\frac{(\text{Benefits})}{(\text{Costs})}$
- a net difference (Benefits-Costs)

Currently, the BPA model does not account for gains in functional ability and life status (although it does include monetary valuations for the unpaid output of non-wage earning rehabilitants). However, the model is currently undergoing revision by a project at the Texas Institute for Rehabilitation (TIRR), which will develop subsystems within the model to account for such functional and life status gains. Because of these impending revisions, we cannot include the precise mathematical formulation for the model in these materials. However, upon final revision the benefit-cost model will be incorporated within the MIS, and the interested reader can obtain documentation on the mathematical formulation from RSA. Further, we can specify the components of program benefits and program costs which are in the current version of the model, and which will remain after final revision.

Both of the benefit-cost data elements use the discounted present value of social[1] benefits and costs, and rely upon the same components to arrive at benefits and costs. These components are as follows:

Benefits

- discounted value of paid earnings;
- change in output of homemaker closures;
- change in output of unpaid family workers;

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[1] A comparison of the full costs and benefits of a VR program can be undertaken from several perspectives. Perhaps the most common benefit-cost perspectives are the "taxpayer" perspective and the "social" perspective. In taxpayer BC, we compare direct administrative and service costs of the VR program as well as the costs of other government agencies providing benefits and services to the client population (SSI, SSDI, Food Stamps, Medicare, other employment and supportive services) with benefits such as taxes that successful rehabilitants pay from their earnings and savings in public assistance. Social BC takes the broadest perspective, incorporating the widest range of costs and benefits and including on the cost side, for example, costs borne by clients and, on the benefit side, client earnings as an addition to the GNP.

- change in "after hours work" (e.g., homemaking tasks performed by wage-earning rehabilitants);
- fringe benefits;
- change in output of families of rehabilitants (as a result of rehabilitants assuming homemaker tasks);
- reductions in public assistance benefits; and
- repeater costs (a "negative benefit").

Costs

- total program costs during the fiscal year, minus carry-over costs and maintenance costs;
- costs borne by parties other than VR;
- research, training, and demonstration costs;
- benefits foregone by clients during participation in VR services (i.e., any wages and fringe benefits foregone by clients with earnings at referral); and
- client-borne costs for VR services.

The model uses two basic types of input: (1) "variables" which are input or computed from program documents (e.g., the RSA-300 and RSA-113) for the year in question; and (2) "parameters" which take the form of constants which are derived by estimation or inference based on previous related research, current macroeconomic conditions, and so forth. Again, we cannot include an exhaustive list of all the input variables and parameters which will be required by the final revised model. Upon final model revision, the interested reader may obtain documentation on all input variables and parameters from RSA.

A few final notes are in order with regard to the components of the current version of the model, as listed above. The costs associated with homemakers and unpaid family workers are the same as those for any other 26 closure. The benefits of a homemaker are determined by estimating the "worth" of homemakers in the general population; that is, by estimating the dollar value of the various functions performed by a homemaker. The worth of disabled homemakers is assumed to be some proportion (less than 1) of the worth of homemakers in general. This proportion is then estimated to be the same as the proportionate worth of disabled workers to normal workers. Unpaid

family workers are treated similarly. The value of a sheltered workshop employee is his/her market value, i.e., his/her wages, regardless of whether they are above or below the minimum wage.

There is a term in the model for workers who have been displaced by handicapped workers. The term estimates the negative impact on these displaced workers. The term currently has a value of zero because there is no evidence of substantial impact in today's economy. This is, of course, not relevant to BEP or sheltered workshop employees.

The net benefit measure (B-C) is included among the standards data elements primarily because it is the preferred approach of economists. The problem with the measure is that it is very sensitive to the scale of program operation: in the case of VR, for example, larger agencies would produce greater total net benefits than small agencies, simply because of their larger caseloads. Thus, the measure is inappropriate for comparing across state agencies, although it is useful for observing change over time within an agency. The ratio measure (B/C) overcomes the problem of agency size, thus allowing for comparisons across agencies. As well, B/C can be used to observe change over time within a single agency.

Formula

2(iii) $\frac{(\text{Benefits})}{(\text{Costs})}$

2(iv) (Benefits - Costs)

Data Sources

- RSA-300
- RSA-2
- RSA-113
- Follow-up Survey

STANDARD 3: VR SHALL MAXIMIZE THE NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF CLIENTS ACCEPTED FOR SERVICES WHO ARE SUCCESSFULLY REHABILITATED, SUBJECT TO THE MEETING OF OTHER STANDARDS.

Data Elements: (i) Percent 26 closures

(ii) Annual change in the number of 26 closures

Traditionally, success in VR has been measured by the number of "26 closures," or successful rehabilitations obtained. Because a central goal of VR is to rehabilitate clients, it is essential that the standards system include a way of presenting how many individuals were successfully served and the extent to which this number increases over time.

Data Element 3(i): Percent 26 closures

Rationale

This data element provides a straightforward measure of an agency's success in rehabilitating the clients it accepts for services. The data element focuses on the proportion of clients, accepted for service (i.e., excluding 08's), who are successfully rehabilitated.

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Number of 26 closures}}{\text{Number of 26 + 28 + 30 closures}}$$

Data Sources

- RSA-113

Data Element 3(ii): Annual change in the number of 26 closures

Rationale

This data element attempts to assess an agency's success in maximizing the number of clients, accepted for services, who are successfully rehabilitated. The measure uses the state agency's prior performance as a baseline for determining success in "maximization." An agency is judged to have maximized the number of rehabilitants if it has increased the number of 26 closures by some previously specified amount, as set by the state agency, in conjunction with RSA.

Formula

(Number of 26 closures in current year)
- (Number of 26 closures in previous year)

Data Sources

- RSA-113

STANDARD 4: REHABILITATED CLIENTS SHALL EVIDENCE ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE

Data Elements: (i) Percent of 26 closures with weekly earnings at or above federal minimum wage

(ii) Comparison of earnings of competitively employed 26 closures to earnings of other employees in state

VR's most basic purpose is to assist disabled persons in finding gainful employment. One fundamental aspect of gainful employment is the ability to be economically self-sufficient.

Data Element 4(i): Percent of 26 closures with weekly earnings at or above federal minimum wage

Rationale

In addressing economic independence, the logical place to look is to wages. This first data element assesses wages as they compare to the federal minimum wage. The normative implications of this data element are that a disabled person should be expected, under equivalent circumstances, to make at least the minimum wage required by law. This data element uses the weekly minimum wage figure as the standard rather than the hourly wage, because the former more accurately captures the concept of this standard. Whereas hourly wage indicates a measure of the employee's worth to the employer, total earnings is a better indicator of the employee's financial well-being. If an employee is able to work only five hours a week, his/her economic condition will be affected by this as well as by the hourly rate.

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Number of 26 closures with weekly earnings at or above federal minimum wage}}{\text{Number of 26 closures}}$$

Data Sources

- RSA-300
- U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the U.S.

Data Element 4(ii): Comparison of earnings of competitively employed 26 closures to the earnings of other employees in state

Rationale

This data element controls for state-to-state variation in earnings levels, whereas data element 4(i) does not. In some respects, this is a more comprehensive indicator than data element 4(i) because it provides an estimate of a client's standard of living relative to other persons in his or her state.

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Mean weekly earnings of competitively employed 26's}}{\text{Mean weekly earnings of other employees in state}}$$

Data Sources

- RSA-300
- U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the U.S.

STANDARD 5: THERE SHALL BE MAXIMUM PLACEMENT OF REHABILITATED CLIENTS INTO COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT. NON-COMPETITIVE CLOSURES SHALL REPRESENT AN IMPROVEMENT IN GAINFUL ACTIVITY FOR THE CLIENT.

Data Elements:
- (i) Percent 26 closures competitively employed
- (ii) Percent competitively employed 26 closures with hourly earnings at or above the federal minimum wage
- (iii) Percent non-competitively employed 26 closures showing improvement in function and life status

Like Standard 4, this standard is concerned with the impact of VR services on their clients. As previously discussed, competitive employment has been seen as the best kind of closure. Recognizing that competitive employment may not be the appropriate placement for all clients, VR regulations require that any placement of a successfully closed client, whether in competititve, sheltered, or non-competitive employment, be into "gainful and

suitable employment consistent with his/her capacities." For this reason, improvement in gainful activity for non-competitive closures is also included as a data element for this standard.

Data Element 5(i): Percent 26 closures competitively employed

Rationale

This standard's bias toward competitive employment reflects the belief that vocational rehabilitation should focus on employment, preferably competitive employment. For a standard emphasizing maximum placement into competitive employment, perhaps the most obvious data element is to determine the proportion of 26 closures placed into competitive employment.

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Number of competitively employed 26's}}{\text{Number of all 26 closures}}$$

Data Sources

- RSA-300

Data Element 5(ii): Percent of competitively employed 26 closures with hourly earnings at or above the federal minimum wage

Rationale

This data element applies more stringent criteria to the measurement of "maximum placement of rehabilitated clients into competitive employment." It compares the number of competitively employed 26 closures with hourly earnings at or above the federal minimum wage to the total number of competitively employed 26 closures. As in data element 4(i), this data element implies that a disabled person in the competitive labor market should be expected to earn at least the federal minimum wage. Unlike 4(i), however, this measure represents an employee's worth to the employer, as determined by the client's hourly wage. Thus, this data element provides a measure of the value of rehabilitated VR clients who are in the competitive labor market relative to the federal minimum wage.

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Number of competitively employed 26 closures with hourly earnings at or above federal minimum wage}}{\text{Number of competitively employed 26's}}$$

Data Sources

- RSA-300
- U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the U.S.

Data Element 5(iii): Percent of non-competitively employed 26 closures showing improvement in function and life status

Rationale

Closures into non-competitive employment may be legitimate for certain clients, but in order to attribute any credit to VR for "rehabilitating" clients into non-competitive employment, there must be some indication that VR helped improve those clients' capacities for gainful activity. This data element will use information gathered on clients at acceptance and at closure, using elements of the Functional Assessment Inventory (FAI) and Life Status Indicators (LSI) instruments which will be added to the client's RSA-300. RSA is currently undertaking a pretest of the FAI and LSI items to determine which specific items to include on the RSA-300.

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Number of non-competitive 26's with improvement on LSI-FAI measures from plan to closure}}{\text{Number of non-competitive 26's}}$$

Data Source

- RSA-300

STANDARD 6: REHABILITATED CLIENTS SHALL EVIDENCE VOCATIONAL GAINS

Data Elements: (i) Change in average earnings for 26 closures
(ii) Other changes in functional ability and life status

It is axiomatic that rehabilitated clients should evidence some sort of vocational gains either in monetary or non-monetary terms at the point VR services terminate. This standard assures that attention will be paid by the VR field to the documenting and seeking changes in a client's earning status, functional ability, or life status. It supplements the concern for measuring post-service outcomes (as in Standards 3-5) by using the client's pre-service circumstances as a baseline for comparison.

Data Element 6(i): Change in average earnings for 26 closures

Rationale

This data element is included because wages are the most straightforward indicator of vocational change. Weekly earnings are used to measure the change in a client's wages which occurred during the period of time he or she received VR services.

Formula

$$\frac{\text{(The sum of closure earnings for all 26 closures) minus (the sum of referral earnings for all 26 closures)}}{\text{Number of 26 closures}}$$

Data Source

- RSA-300

Data Element 6(ii): Other changes in functional ability and life status

Rationale

In addition to vocational change (as measured by data element 6(i)), the VR program also often acts as a change-agent in terms of non-vocational aspects of a client's life. As with the data elements associated with non-competitive employment closures (as in data element 5(iii)), the methodology for assessing non-vocational change requires further development before a

specific computation formula can be developed. Following RSA's pretest of the FAI/LSI data items and the selection of those items which will be added to the R-300, further refinement of this data element will be undertaken.

STANDARD 7: REHABILITATED CLIENTS SHALL RETAIN THE BENEFITS OF VR SERVICES

Data Elements:
(i) Percent of 26 closures retaining earnings at follow-up
(ii) Comparison of 26 closures with public assistance as the primary source of support at closure and at follow-up
(iii) Percent of non-competitively employed 26 closures retaining closure skills at follow-up

Vocational rehabilitation programs, like all service programs, ideally strive to have the gains realized by their clients through program participation retained over time. Job losses shortly following successful closure can identify serious short-comings in a program's service strategy and may point to an incongruence between program goals and individual client goals. Are clients being "rehabilitated" on only a temporary basis, or are the gains achieved during the service period retained over time? This question has a great degree of importance to the over VR mission and thus a standard in this area is highly appropriate. Aside from employment measures of benefit retention, additional attention is given to expanding the data elements for this standard to include non-employment measures.

Data Element 7(i): Percent of 26 closures retaining earnings at follow-up

Rationale

As noted, retention of benefits gained through VR services is very important both to the individual client and to the overall effectiveness of the program. This data element looks at retention of wages earned as one of the most important benefits obtained from VR.

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Number of 26's with earnings at closure who retained or increased earnings at follow-up}}{\text{Number of 26 closures with earnings at closure, surveyed at follow-up}}$$

Data Sources

- RSA-300
- Follow-up Survey (merge with RSA-300)

Data Element 7(ii): Comparison of 26 closures with public assistance as the primary source of support at closure and at follow-up

Rationale

This data element provides a needed dimension in assessing benefit-retention for non-competitively as well as competitively placed successful closures. Here benefits are proxied by measuring the extent of the clients' use of public resources. By focusing on the degree to which there is a reduced need for public assistance, an emphasis is given to the economic self-sufficiency of the client in terms of stability or improvement.

This data element requires a new definition of "primary source of support" where "source of support" is broken into only two categories (public versus private) and where primary is taken to mean the source supplying 51% or more of a person's total monthly support.

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Percent of 26 closures with public assistance as the primary source of support at follow-up}}{\text{Percent of 26 closures with public assistance as the primary source of support at closure}}$$

Data Sources

- RSA-300
- Follow-up Survey (merge with RSA-300)

Data Element 7(iii): Percent of non-competitively employed 26 closures retaining closure skills at follow-up

Rationale

Retention of functional and life status benefits is equally important as the retention of vocational benefits, particularly in the case of non-competitively employed 26 closures for whom non-vocational improvemtn may be a primary benefit derived from participation in VR services. This data

element updates the information provided by data element 5(iii), and will use the same FAI and LSI data items used for data element 5(iii). However, for the purposes of this data element, the FAI and LSI items will need to be modified into a form suitable for self-administration by the clients, via the Follow-up Survey. The specific items and their forms will be determined after completion of the RSA's FAI/LSI pretest. Once implemented, the data element will have the following formula and data sources.

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Number of non-competitive 26 closures retaining LSI/FAI closure skills}}{\text{Number of non-competitive 26 closures surveyed at follow-up}}$$

Data Sources

- RSA-300
- Follow-up Survey (merge with RSA-300)

STANDARD 8: CLIENTS SHALL BE SATISFIED WITH THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM, AND REHABILITATED CLIENTS SHALL APPRAISE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES AS USEFUL IN ACHIEVING AND MAINTAINING THEIR VOCATIONAL OBJECTIVES.

Data Elements:

(i) Percent of closed clients satisfied with their overall VR experience

(ii) Percent of closed clients satisfied with specific aspects of VR

(iii) Percent of 26 closures judging the services they received to have been useful in obtaining their job/homemaker situation or in current performance

As an indicator of consumer appraisal of services, the standard on client satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation services has considerable merit. Since client satisfaction polls usually offer a high degree of support for the program, this standard is viewed as having distinct political value in lobbying for expanded financial support at both the state and federal level. Complementing the political utility of a satisfaction measure is the inclusion of a client utility assessment in the standard. The intent of this clause is to ensure that successfully closed clients assess the utility of VR services positively in terms of actually having contributed to their

getting a job and functioning in it. As a substantive rationale for the satisfaction standard, utility assessment offers a valuable entree for probing areas needing program improvement and for ensuring consumer involvement in improving the responsiveness of VR services to client needs.

Data Element 8(i): Percent of closed clients satisfied with their overall VR experience

Rationale

As one of the data elements of the original nine standards, retaining overall satisfaction as a measure of program performance has several advantages including: (1) the procedure is in place; (2) developmental costs have already been absorbed; (3) it constitutes a composite measure of client satisfaction which responds to legislative and consumer advocacy concerns; and (4) the data show some discrimination among closure statuses.

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Number of closed clients surveyed who are satisfied with their overall VR experience}}{\text{Number of closed clients surveyed}}$$

Data Source

- Closure Survey (merge with RSA-300)

Data Element 8(ii): Percent of closed clients satisfied with specific aspects of VR

Rationale

This data element attempts to gain a more detailed picture of client satisfaction with specific key aspects of the overall VR process. In particular, the aspects isolated for inquiry include questions about the client's counselor, the physical restoration services received, the job training services received, and the job placement process. Consistent negative assessment in any one of these areas would be highly useful in guiding state evaluations and providing substantive input to programmatic improvements.

Formula

a. $\frac{\text{Number of closed clients satisfied with their counselors}}{\text{Number of closed clients surveyed}}$

b. $\frac{\text{Number of closed clients satisfied with physical restoration services}}{\text{Number of closed clients surveyed}}$

c. $\frac{\text{Number of closed clients satisfied with job training services}}{\text{Number of closed clients surveyed}}$

d. $\frac{\text{Number of closed clients satisfied with job placement services}}{\text{Number of closed clients surveyed}}$

Data Source

- Closure Survey (merge with RSA-300)

Data Element 8(iii): Percent of 26 closures judging the services they received to have been useful in obtaining their job/homemaker situation or in current performance

Rationale

Rehabilitated clients can make fairly objective assessments of whether the services they received were instrumental in securing their outcome situations. It is equally as important to assess the contribution VR services make both to the attainment of a specific closure situation or job and to the development of more general skills which help clients function in these new positions. While not unequivocably objective, the client's assessment of whether he or she uses the skills and/or knowledge gained from VR services is the closest approximation of the case.

Formula

$$\frac{\text{Number of 26 closures judging the services they received to have been useful in obtaining their job/homemaker situation or in current performance}}{\text{Number of 26 closures surveyed}}$$

Data Source

- Closure Survey (merge with RSA-300)

COMPUTING THE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS DATA ELEMENTS

Having provided the reader with an overview of the Performance Standards and data elements, the next task is to provide the detailed information needed to access the required data and compute the data elements. Table 2 serves this function. Reading from left to right, the table provides the following information for each data element:

- the data element wording and the equation for computing the data element;
- definitions of terms used in the data element's equation;
- the sources (i.e., documents, reports, or surveys) which provide the information needed to compute the data element;
- the data specifications, which identify the location of the specific information items used to compute the data element.[1]

Table 2 should suffice as the general instructions on how to compute the data elements. However, there are two additional points which must be made regarding the process of accessing data and computing the data elements:

1. Merging of client surveys with client RSA-300 records: The client Closure and Follow-up Surveys will need to be "merged" with the individual clients' RSA-300's. In the case of the Follow-up Survey, this is required so that comparisons may be made between the client's situation at closure (e.g., earnings level) and his or her situation at the point of follow-up. The data items using the Closure Survey do not require any over-time comparisons. However, the Closure Survey should be merged with the RSA-300 data record so that RSA and state agencies may have access to data on the client's personal characteristics and services provided. In this way, RSA and state agencies may conduct policy-related analysis when problems in performance appear in the satisfaction/service utility data elements. For both the

[1]The reader must bear in mind that these locations may change as a result of revisions to RSA reports.

Closure and the Follow-up Survey, merging requires that a consistent identifier appear both on the RSA-300 and on the Survey. The client's case number or Social Security number are the most logical client identifiers to use.

2. Using only "valid" cases to compute data elements: Most of the data elements for Standards 4-8 require input of client-level data. All calculations must be made using only those cases for which "legitimate" data exist (i.e., using only "valid" cases). This excludes cases on which data are "missing," because:

- the counselor could not obtain the information for entry on the RSA-300;
- the client gave no response to a question on the survey;
- the client could not remember or did not know the answer to a question on the survey; or
- the question was not appropriate to the client's circumstances (e.g., clients receiving no physical restoration services should not be used to assess satisfaction with physical restoration services).

For most of the data elements using client-level data, the valid cases will determine the denominator for the data element. For example, data element 4(i) computes the percent of 26 closures earning the weekly minimum wage at closure. Assume that there are 1,000 26 closures, total; but that 200 of those cases are missing data on earnings at closure (leaving 800 with "valid" data). Assume further that, of the 800 with valid data, 400 earned the weekly minimum wage at closure. Depending on the denominator used, the state agency's performance on data element 4(i) will vary:

- using all 26 closures:

  400 (# earning weekly minimum wage)
  ÷ 1000 (all 26 closures)
  = 40%

- using only valid cases:

  400 (# earning weekly minimum wage)
  ÷ 800 (26 closures with valid data)
  = 50%

Clearly, in this case (and in fact, in all cases where a percentage score is computed) a state agency's performance will appear "better" when only valid cases are used for the computation. Further, since we do not know the true situation of clients for whom data are missing, we may mistakenly bias the score downward when including invalid cases. (For example, in the numerical example above, the 200 cases with missing data may in fact have been earning the weekly minimum wage. Had the data been available, the agency's score would have been 60%. We must, however, assume that they were not earning the weekly minimum wage, if we wish to include them in the calculation.) In short, because we wish to provide as accurate a picture of performance as possible, based on the available data, we must compute the data elements using only those cases for which all data exist; that is, the valid cases.

Table 2

Summary of Data Elements, Definitions, and Data Specifications

for the VR Program Performance Standards

STANDARD 1: VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SHALL SERVE THE MAXIMUM PROPORTION OF THE POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE TARGET POPULATION, SUBJECT TO THE LEVEL OF FEDERAL PROGRAM FUNDING AND PRIORITIES AMONG CLIENTS.

| Data Element and Equation | Definitions | Data Sources | Data Specifications |
|---|---|---|---|
| (i) Clients served per 100,000 population:<br># served in a given year / state population (in 100,000s) | # served = all active and closed cases (statuses 10-30) in the year. | RSA - 113 (Oct - Sept) | II.A.3.a |
| | State population = current best proxy for "eligible population." Divide state population by 100,000 and truncate at two decimal points. | U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-25 | State population estimate as of July |
| (ii) Percent severely disabled served:<br># severely disabled served in a given year / # served in a given year | # severely disabled served = all active and closed severely disabled cases (statuses 10-30) in the year. | RSA - 113 (Oct - Sept) | II.A.3.b |
| | # served = same as 1(i). | RSA - 113 (Oct - Sept) | II.A.3.a |

Table 2 (continued)

STANDARD 2: THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM SHALL USE RESOURCES IN A COST-EFFECTIVE MANNER AND SHOW A POSITIVE RETURN TO SOCIETY OF INVESTMENT IN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION OF DISABLED CLIENTS.

| Data Element and Equation | Definitions | Data Sources | Data Specifications |
|---|---|---|---|
| (i) Expenditure per competitively employed 26 closure:<br>Total agency expenditures / # competitively employed 26 closures | Total agency expenditures = all monies (state and federal) spent under control of state agency (110, Trust Fund, SSI, I&E, and any other funds under control of state agency). | RSA - 2 (Oct - Sept) | III.C.8 (Sec. 110) + IV.4 (Trust Fund + SSI)[a] + V.C.7 (I&E)[a] |
| | # competitively employed 26 closures = # of non-BEP self-employed and wage and salaried workers in the competitive labor market. | RSA - 300 | Item 4.P.2 (26 closures); codes 1 and 3 on Item 4.I (competitively employed) |
| (ii) Expenditure per 26 closure:<br>Total agency expenditures / # 26 closures | Total agency expenditures = same as 2(i). | RSA - 2 | III.C.8 (Sec. 110) + IV.4 (Trust Fund + SSI)[a] + V.C.7 (I&E)[a] |
| | # 26 closures = closures during fiscal year. | RSA - 113 | Item II.A.4.a |
| (iii) Ratio of total VR benefits to total VR costs (benefit - cost ratio):<br>Benefits / Costs | Benefits = paid earnings + homemaking monetary valuation + unpaid work monetary valuation + fringe benefits + change in labor force participation - repeater costs. Discounted present value. | RSA - 300<br>RSA - 2<br>RSA- 113<br>Follow-up Survey | Summary of data requirements appears in Appendix 1. Model currently undergoing revision. Final version of model will be incorporated in the MIS. Documentation on data requirements and mathematical formulation of revised model will be available from RSA after final revision. |
| | Costs = total program costs + costs borne by non-VR parties + client-borne costs + foregone client benefits (wages and fringe benefits) + research costs + training costs + demonstration costs - (carryover costs and maintenance costs). Discounted present value. | | |
| (iv) Total net benefit from VR services (discounted net present value):<br>Benefits - Costs | Benefits = same as 2(iii). | RSA - 300<br>RSA - 2<br>RSA - 113<br>Follow-up Survey | Same as 2(iii) |
| | Costs = same as 2(iii). | | |

[a]If the fund is relevant to current operations

Table 2 (continued)

STANDARD 3: VR SHALL MAXIMIZE THE NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF CLIENTS ACCEPTED FOR SERVICES WHO ARE SUCCESSFULLY REHABILITATED, SUBJECT TO THE MEETING OF OTHER STANDARDS.

| Data Element and Equation | Definitions | Data Sources | Data Specifications |
|---|---|---|---|
| (i) Percent 26 closures: # 26 closures / # 26 + 28 + 30 closures | # 26 closures = 26 closures during fiscal year. | RSA - 113 | II.A.4.a |
| | # 26 + 28 + 30 closures = total accepted clients closed (26 + 28 + 30) during fiscal year. | RSA - 113 | II.A.4.a + II.A.5.a + II.A.6.a |
| (ii) Annual change in number of 26 closures: (# 26 closures in current year) - (# 26 closures in previous year) | # 26 closures, current fiscal year. | RSA - 113 (current year) | II.A.4.a |
| | # 26 closures, previous fiscal year. | RSA - 113 (previous year) | II.A.4.a |

Table 2 (continued)

STANDARD 4: REHABILITATED CLIENTS SHALL EVIDENCE ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE.

| Data Element and Equation | Definitions | Data Sources | Data Specifications |
|---|---|---|---|
| (i) Percent 26 closures with weekly earnings at/above the federal minimum wage: | Weekly earnings = earnings at closure. | RSA - 300 | Item 4.J |
| # 26 closures with weekly earnings at/above the federal minimum wage / # 26 closures | Weekly minimum wage = 35 hours x hourly minimum wage (BLS definition of full-time employment). | U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the U.S. | Federal hourly minimum wage |
| | # 26 closures = closures during fiscal year. | RSA - 300 | Item 4.P.2 |
| (ii) Comparison of earnings of competitively employed 26 closures to earnings of employees in the state: | Competitively employed 26s = wage and salaried workers (competitive labor market), and self-employed (non-BEP). | RSA - 300 | Item 4.P.2 (26 closures); codes 1 and 3 on Item 4.I (competitively employed) |
| Mean weekly earnings of competitively employed 26's / Mean weekly earnings of employees in the state | Mean weekly earnings = average earnings, week of closure, for competitive 26 closures. | RSA - 300 | Item 4.J (average) |
| | Employees in state = production workers in manufacturing industries. | U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the U.S. | Labor Force, Employment, and Earnings: Production Workers, Manufacturing Industries -- Hours and Gross Earnings, by state, average weekly earnings |

Table 2 (continued)

STANDARD 5: THERE SHALL BE MAXIMUM PLACEMENT OF REHABILITATED CLIENTS INTO COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT. NON-COMPETITIVE CLOSURES SHALL REPRESENT AN IMPROVEMENT IN GAINFUL ACTIVITY FOR THE CLIENT.

| Data Element and Equation | Definitions | Data Sources | Data Specifications |
|---|---|---|---|
| (i) Percent 26 closures competitively employed:<br># competitively employed 26s / # 26 closures | # competitively employed = wage and salaried workers (competitive labor market) plus self-employed (non-BEP). | RSA-300 | Codes 1 and 3 on Item 4.I |
| | # 26 closures | RSA-300 | Item 4.P.2 |
| (ii) Percent competitively employed 26 closures with hourly earnings at/above the federal minimum wage:<br># competitively employed 26 closures with hourly earnings at/above federal minimum wage / # competitively employed 26s | Hourly earnings = (weekly earnings at closure) ÷ (# hours worked). | RSA-300 | Item 4.J (weekly earnings at closure); Item 4.M (# hours worked at closure) |
| | Hourly minimum wage | Statistical Abstract of the U.S. | Federal hourly minimum wage |
| | # competitively employed 26s = same as 5(i). | RSA-300 | Codes 1 and 3 on Item 4.I; Item 4.P.2 |
| (iii) Percent non-competitively employed 26 closures showing improvement in function and life status (implement after LSI/FAI pretest):<br># non-competitive 26s with improvement on LSI/FAI measures from plan to closure / # non-competitive 26s | Non-competitive 26s = sheltered workshop worker, self-employed (BEP), homemakers, and unpaid family workers. | RSA-300 | Item 4.P.2 (26 closures); Codes 2, 3, 5, and 6 on Item 4.I (non-competitively employed) |
| | Improvement on LSI/FAI = positive change on functional and status indicators; measures to be determined by pretest. | R-300:<br>• acceptance<br>• closure | <br>Item 2.V<br>Item 4.N |

Table 2 (continued)

STANDARD 6: REHABILITATED CLIENTS SHALL EVIDENCE VOCATIONAL GAINS.

| Data Element and Equation | Definitions | Data Sources | Data Specifications |
|---|---|---|---|
| (i) Average earnings change of 26 closures, before versus after VR services: | Sum of earnings for 26 closures = total earnings for the group of 26 closures: | | |
| (Sum of closure earnings for 26 closures) minus (Sum of referral earnings for 26 closures) | • at closure | RSA-300 | Item 4.J (sum for all 26s) |
| # 26 closures | • at referral. | RSA-300 | Item 2.P (sum for all 26s) |
| | #26 closures = closures during current fiscal year. | RSA-300 | Item 4.P.2 |
| (ii) Other changes in functional ability and life status (implement after LSI/FAI pretest) | Change in functional ability and life status = same as 5(iii); measures to be determined by pretest. | RSA-300: | |
| | | • acceptance | Item 2.V |
| | | • closure | Item 4.N |

Table 2 (continued)

STANDARD 7: REHABILITATED CLIENTS SHALL RETAIN THE BENEFITS OF VR SERVICES

| Data Element and Equation | Definitions | Data Sources | Data Specifications |
|---|---|---|---|
| (i) Percent 26 closures retaining earnings at follow-up:<br># of 26 closures with earnings at closure who retained or increased earnings at follow-up<br>/ 26 closures with earnings at closure, surveyed at follow-up | Retained or increased earnings = cases where follow-up earnings are greater than or equal to closure earnings. | RSA-300<br>Follow-up Survey (Merge with R-300) | Item 4.J (Weekly closure earnings<br>Question 3 (Weekly earnings at follow-up) |
| | # 26 closures with earnings at closure = cases where weekly closure earnings are greater than zero. | RSA-300 | Item 4.P.2 (26 closures)<br>Item 4.J (Weekly closure earnings) |
| | Only 26 closures are surveyed at follow-up. | | |
| (ii) Comparison of 26 closures with public assistance as primary source of support at closure and at follow-up:<br>% 26 closures with public assistance as primary source of support at follow-up<br>% 26 closures with public assistance as primary source of support at closure | Public assistance as primary source of support = cases where SSI, SSDI, AFDC, GA, Workmen's Compensation, and public institutions account (singly or in combination) for more than 50% of a person's total monthly support:<br>• at follow-up<br>• at closure. | Follow-up Survey (Merge with R-300)<br>RSA-300 | Questions 2, 3, 4: Q.2 ÷ (Q.2 + (Q.3x4) + Q.4)<br>Item 4.N.1 |
| | 26 closures (Only 26 closures are surveyed at follow-up). | RSA-300 | Item 4.P.2 |
| (iii) Percent non-competitively employed 26 closures retaining closure skills at follow-up (implement after LSI/FAI pretest):<br># non-competitive 26 closures retaining LSI/FAI closure skills<br># non-competitive 26s surveyed at follow-up | Non-competitive closures = sheltered workshop worker, self-employed (BEP), homemakers, and unpaid family workers. | RSA-300 | Item 4.P.2 (26 closures); Codes 2, 4, 5, and 6 on Item 4.I (non-competitively employed) |
| | Retaining closure skills = equal or greater score on functional and status indicators at follow-up, compared to closure:<br>• closure (measures to be determined by pretest)<br>• follow-up (measures to be determined by pretest). | RSA-300 (closure section)<br>Follow-up Survey (Merge with R-300) | Item 4.N<br>Question 5 |

Table 2 (continued)

STANDARD 8: CLIENTS SHALL BE SATISFIED WITH THE VR PROGRAM, AND REHABILITATED CLIENTS SHALL APPRAISE VR SERVICES AS USEFUL IN ACHIEVING AND MAINTAINING THEIR VOCATIONAL OBJECTIVES.

| Data Element and Equation | Definitions | Data Sources | Data Specifications |
|---|---|---|---|
| (i) Percent closed clients satisfied with overall VR experience:<br># closed clients surveyed satisfied with overall VR experience / # closed clients surveyed | Closed clients = 26, 28, and 30 closures (Closure survey given only to 26, 28, and 30 closures). | Closure Survey (Merge with R-300) | Question 1 (all respondents) |
| (ii) Percent closed clients satisfied with specific aspects of VR:<br># closed clients satisfied with specific aspects of VR / # closed clients surveyed<br>(four equations) | Closed clients = 26, 28, and 30 closures.<br>Specific aspects = satisfied/not satisfied with counselor, physical restoration services, job training services, job placement services. | Closure Survey (Merge with R-300) | Questions 2 - 8 (All respondents) |
| (iii) Percent 26 closures judging services received to have been useful in obtaining their job/homemaker situation or in current performance:<br># 26 closures judging services received to have been useful in obtaining their job/homemaker situation or in current performance / # 26 closures surveyed | Closure Status = 26.<br>Useful = "useful in helping get or perform in" the person's closure occupation. | RSA-300<br>Closure Survey (Merge with R-300) | Item 4.P.2<br>Question 9 (26 closures only) |

# Vocational Rehabilitation Program
# Standards Evaluation System

## Trainee Handbook–C:

## Administering the Closure and Follow-Up Surveys

bpa
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## ADMINISTERING THE CLOSURE AND FOLLOW-UP SURVEYS

The Vocational Rehabilitation Performance Standards require that VR clients be satisfied with the services and training received, that the services are useful in obtaining and performing jobs and that the benefits of the VR program be retained. In the past, VR agencies have gathered information addressing issues such as these through the use of follow-up questionnnaire surveys. However, an early BPA review of the VR Program Evaluation Standards noted many criticisms of this effort including non-comparable sampling designs, survey formats, definitions, and resulting data across states; high nonresponse rates; and reporting biases. The closure and follow-up surveys described here are designed to replace the current unstandardized system with a new approach, standardized across states and yielding valid, useful data.

### CLOSURE SURVEY

The closure survey is designed to be distributed at case closure to clients whose services are terminating. As a self-completion mailback questionnaire, it is designed to be self-explanatory.

The closure survey will serve as the source of data about client satisfaction with overall services and various aspects of services (e.g., counselor performance, the quality of placement services). It also will provide data on the clients' assessment of the usefulness of their services in obtaining and functioning in their job or homemaking situation (see Figure 1).

Both the closure and follow-up surveys are essential sources of data for computing specific data elements. Table 1 shows how the closure survey relates to the VR Performance Standards by indicating which items on the survey are used to provide data for specific data elements. As with the other standards and data elements, these are useful not only for measuring total agency performance, but also as a closer look at district and even individual counselor performance. The closure survey can be used

Figure 1

## CLIENT ASSESSMENT SURVEYS

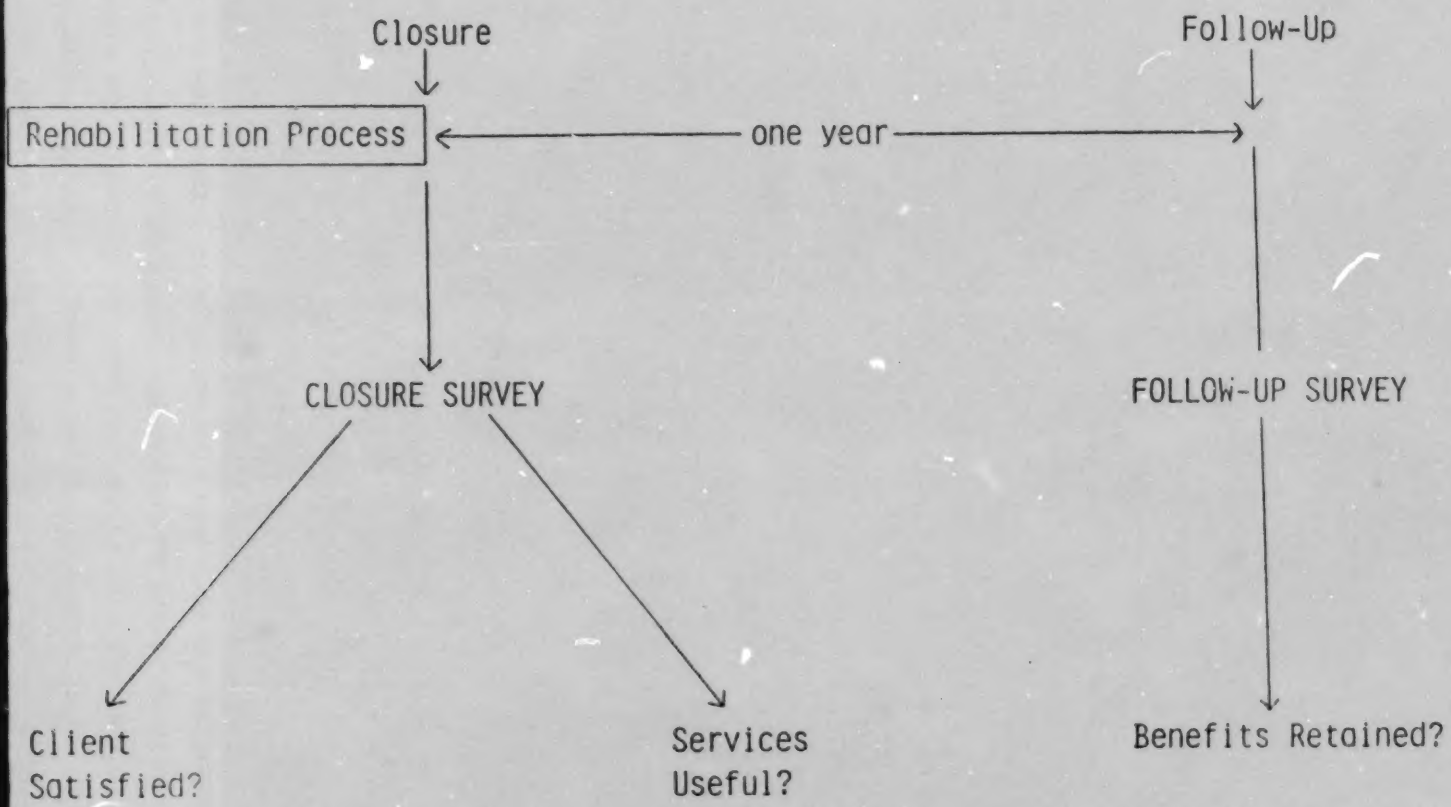


Table 1

Uses of Closure Survey Data for Performance Standards

| Closure Survey Question: | Used in Data Element: |
|---|---|
| 1 | 8(i) (Percent of closed clients satisfied with overall VR experience) |
| 2 | 8(ii) (Percent of closed clients satisfied with their counselors) |
| 3, 4 | 8(ii) (Percent of closed clients receiving physical restoration services, who are satisfied with those services) |
| 5, 6 | 8(ii) (Percent of closed clients receiving job training services, who are satisfied with those services) |
| 7, 8 | 8(ii) (Percent of closed clients receiving job placement services, who are satisfied with those services) |
| 9 | 8(iii) (Percent of 26 closures judging services received to have been useful in obtaining their job/homemaker situation or in current performance) |

to help identify strengths and weaknesses in specific service areas. Also, by linking this data to data on individual client characteristics, it is possible to study satisfaction with services and utility of services across different client groups.

FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

The follow-up survey is designed to be distributed as a mail-back questionnaire to be completed by former clients one year following completion of VR services. The major purpose of the follow-up survey is to determine the extent to which the benefits gained by the VR client have a long-term effect. This is accomplished by asking clients about work status, earnings, and other sources of support, and about a variety of skills, to determine to what extent the benefits of services have been retained over a 12-month period.

Once again, a table has been provided illustrating the relationship between items on the survey and specific data elements of the standards. Also, as in the case of the closure survey, the follow-up survey can provide valuable information at the district and counselor levels in addition to providing the necessary data for computation of the standards. Through the follow-up surveys, in conjunction with data about individual client characteristics, VR can learn much about the long-term impact of the program's services on different types of clients, as well as how that impact might vary across districts or counselors.

Table 2

Uses of Follow-Up Survey Data for Performance Standards

| Follow-Up Survey Question: | Used in Data Element: |
|---|---|
| 1 | (Update on work status. Not used explicitly for standards.) |
| 2 | 7(ii) (Primary source of support) |
| 3 | 2(iii), 2(iv) (Benefit-cost)<br>7(i) (Earnings retention)<br>7(ii) (Primary source of support) |
| 4 | 7(ii) (Primary source of support) |
| 5[a] | 7(iii) (Retention of functional abilities and life status) |

[a]Questions to be added after pretest of the Life Functioning Index (LFI).

ADMINISTRATION OF THE SURVEYS: PLANNING AHEAD

Having presented a basic overview of what the closure and follow-up surveys are, the next sections of this guide will describe methods of effectively implementing the surveys. The first step in this process is to plan ahead. This may seem at first like stating the obvious, but the importance of planning for the administration of the surveys cannot be adequately stressed. Just as error can be reduced through appropriate sampling methods or questionnaire design, so it is also possible to reduce error through adequate planning. For example, one would be unable to implement a carefully timed follow-up procedure requiring replacement questionnaires if too few are printed. Likewise, processing returned questionnaires and follow-up reminders requires planning in advance for adequate staff. Attention to administrative details may be as crucial to obtaining high quality data as the questionnaire or cover letter.

There are four major steps in planning the implementation of the surveys:

1) identifying all tasks to be accomplished;
2) determining how each task is dependent on the others;
3) determining in what order the tasks must be performed; and
4) deciding the means by which each task is to be accomplished.

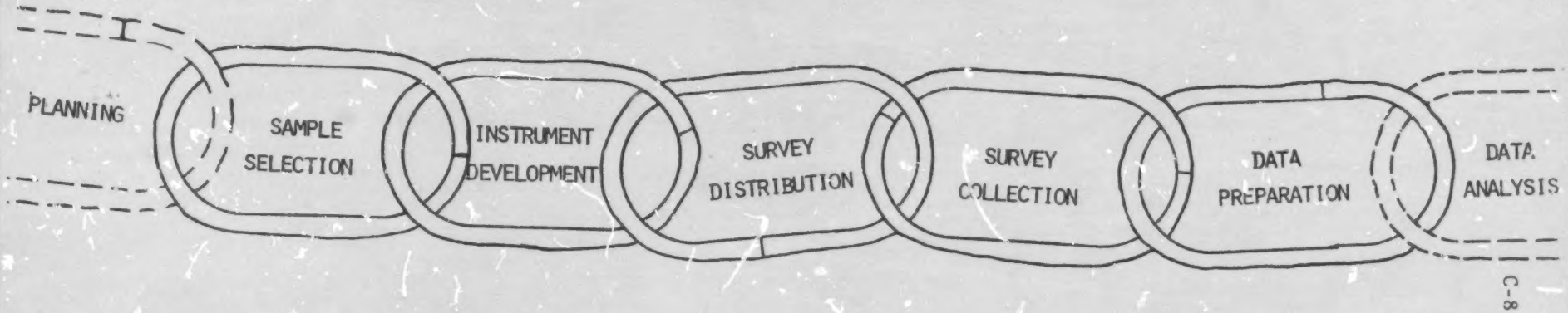
While it will not be possible here to take the reader through all of these steps, the sections that follow will identify the major tasks and provide methods for accomplishing them.

There are five major activities involved in implementing the surveys and collecting the data:

- Sample Selection;
- Instrument Development;
- Survey Distribution;
- Survey Collection; and
- Cleaning and Coding the Data.

Each one of these activities or tasks is essential to collecting quality data. Perhaps these tasks can best be viewed as links in a chain. If any one of the links is weak, the whole chain is weakened. In order to ensure an effectively administered survey, each one of these activities must be planned ahead. The following pages describe the components of these activities and the recommended methods for carrying them out.

## Links in the Survey/Data Collection Chain




C-8

## SAMPLE SELECTION

The careful selection of an appropriate survey sample is crucial to the design of any survey or other data collection process where data is to be collected from less than the total universe of potential respondents. Obviously, the best way to prevent sampling biases or other sampling problems would be to distribute closure and follow-up surveys to all clients. However, not only would all but the smallest states find this impractical, but it is also not necessary. For the purposes of this survey, a randomly selected sample of appropriate size will provide adequate data to respond to the VR Performance Standards as well as provide state VR agencies with a valid base for collecting information about any other aspects of the program that the agency may choose to include in the surveys.

### Who Should Be Included in the Sample?

The closure survey is designed to collect data from clients as they are closed from VR services. Since the closure survey is designed to gather information about clients' satisfaction with services and the usefulness of those services, clients closed in Status 08, having received no services, will not be surveyed. Thus, the sample will include:

- 26 closures,
- 28 closures, and
- 30 closures.

The follow-up survey was designed with a different purpose in mind. Rather than surveying all clients who received services from VR to find out about their experiences, the follow-up survey is designed to determine whether the benefits received have been retained over time. For this survey, only those receiving substantial benefits from their VR services are included. Thus, the sample will include only 26 closures.

How Many Clients are Needed for the Sample?

For the closure survey, the sample should include 500 clients each year. This should be distributed among the three closure statuses as follows:

- 26 closures - 300,
- 28 closures - 100,
- 30 closures - 100.

Clients should be sampled on a monthly basis throughout the year. Thus, the sample size for each closure status will be as follows:

- 26 closures - 25 per month,
- 28 closures - 8-9 per month,
- 30 closures - 8-9 per month.

For the follow-up survey, the sample should include 200 clients per year. As in the case of the closure survey, clients should be sampled throughout the year on a monthly basis. Thus, the sample for the follow-up survey will include 16-17 26 closures per month.

The Monthly Sampling Plan

In order to ensure the best possible survey data, it is important that the selection of clients be made on a random basis. Each month the sample should be drawn by systematically selecting every "n" case. The "n" here is determined by dividing the total number of cases by the number to be selected. For example:

| Status | Actual # of Cases | Monthly Sample Size | Select Every |
|---|---|---|---|
| 26 | 250 | ÷ 25 | 10th |
| 28 | 99 | ÷ 9 | 11th |
| 30 | 78 | ÷ 9 | 8th |

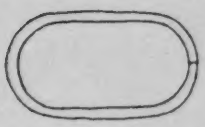
A new monthly sampling plan must be made each month. To facilitate this process, sampling forms for an entire year follow.

Monthly Sampling Plan: Closure Survey

| Status | Month _____ Actual Number of Cases | Monthly Sample Size | Select Every | Month _____ Actual Number of Cases | Monthly Sample Size | Select Every | Month _____ Actual Number of Cases | Monthly Sample Size | Select Every | Month _____ Actual Number of Cases | Monthly Sample Size | Select Every |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 26 | | ÷ 25 | _____th | | ÷ 25 | _____th | | ÷ 25 | _____th | | ÷ 25 | _____th |
| 28 | | ÷ 9 | _____th | | ÷ 9 | _____th | | ÷ 9 | _____th | | ÷ 9 | _____th |
| 30 | | ÷ 9 | _____th | | ÷ 10 | _____th | | ÷ 9 | _____th | | ÷ 9 | _____th |

| Status | Month _____ Actual Number of Cases | Monthly Sample Size | Select Every | Month _____ Actual Number of Cases | Monthly Sample Size | Select Every | Month _____ Actual Number of Cases | Monthly Sample Size | Select Every | Month _____ Actual Number of Cases | Monthly Sample Size | Select Every |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 26 | | ÷ 25 | _____th | | ÷ 25 | _____th | | ÷ 25 | _____th | | ÷ 25 | _____th |
| 28 | | ÷ 10 | _____th | | ÷ 9 | _____th | | ÷ 10 | _____th | | ÷ 9 | _____th |
| 30 | | ÷ 9 | _____th | | ÷ 9 | _____th | | ÷ 9 | _____th | | ÷ 9 | _____th |

| Status | Month _____ Actual Number of Cases | Monthly Sample Size | Select Every | Month _____ Actual Number of Cases | Monthly Sample Size | Select Every | Month _____ Actual Number of Cases | Monthly Sample Size | Select Every | Month _____ Actual Number of Cases | Monthly Sample Size | Select Every |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 26 | | ÷ 25 | _____th | | ÷ 25 | _____th | | ÷ 25 | _____th | | ÷ 25 | _____th |
| 28 | | ÷ 9 | _____th | | ÷ 9 | _____th | | ÷ 9 | _____th | | ÷ 9 | _____th |
| 30 | | ÷ 9 | _____th | | ÷ 10 | _____th | | ÷ 9 | _____th | | ÷ 9 | _____th |



## INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

The next major link in the survey chain to be described here is that of preparing the questionnaires for distribution. The size of this task will vary greatly from state to state, depending on the extent to which agencies choose to modify the standardized questionnaires to meet the state's own needs. The preparation of a questionnaire consists of three major activities:

1) writing the questions;
2) developing the format; and
3) printing the questionnaire.

Berkeley Planning Associates has already done the first two of these steps. The surveys appear at the end of this chapter on pages 28-33. Carefully review the proposed surveys. If there are no additional questions your state VR agency wishes to ask, and if there are no desired format changes, the first two steps may be skipped and you may proceed directly to Step 3 -- printing the questionnaire. For those agencies wishing to modify the surveys, however, Steps 1 and 2 are described below.

### Step 1 - Writing the Questions

The survey developed by Berkeley Planning Associates includes all of the questions necessary to collect client survey data for the VR Performance Standards. While agencies may choose to add additional questions, the closure and follow-up surveys must contain at least those questions included in BPA's questionnaire. It is also important that all states use the same wording of these questions and ask them in the same order to standardize the responses so that data can be aggregated and compared across states. Any questions that your agency may wish to add must be added to the end of the surveys, following the standardized questions.

Some states may choose to take advantage of this survey contact with clients to ask additional questions that relate to the state's own program evaluation and planning needs. When writing questions for a survey there are a number of considerations to keep in mind.

Identify the Kind of Information Being Sought

The first step in writing a question is to identify exactly what kind of information is desired from survey respondents. Questions can usually be classified as requesting one or more of these types of information:

- attitudes -- what people say they want;
- beliefs -- what people think is true;
- behavior -- what people do; and
- attributes -- what people are.

It is important to distinguish between these types of information and to determine which of these is the most appropriate for answering a given research or evaluation question. Otherwise, efforts to write questions may inadvertently result in obtaining a different type of information from that which is desired.

Deciding Question Structure

The second major decision in writing questions is to determine question structure. One basis for distinguishing among question structures is the nature of the response behavior asked of the client.

- Open-ended -- respondents create their own answers;
- Closed-ended with ordered choices -- respondents choose the most appropriate response along a scale;
- Closed-ended with unordered choices -- respondents choose from among discrete categories; and
- partially closed-ended -- although responses are provided, respondents have the option of creating their own.

Each type of information mentioned earlier (i.e., attitudes, beliefs, behavior, and attributes) can be requested using any of these structures. However, some structures tend to be more suitable for obtaining certain types of information than others. Open-ended questions are useful for allowing respondents to express themselves freely or to elicit a precise piece of information where the number of possible responses is so large that listing them would be unwieldy. Closed-ended questions with ordered choices are

suited to determining such things as intensity of feeling, degree of involvement, and frequency of activity. Closed-ended questions with unordered choices are useful for asking respondents to evaluate each choice individually. Partially closed-ended questions provide an opportunity to give a response that the question-writer may not have thought of.

Choosing the Wording

Having decided what to ask and how to ask it, the third decision is how to word it. Effective wording of survey questions is a skill that is developed through experience. However, there are a number of considerations that can help even a novice to state the question in a meaningful way. The following questions can serve as a useful guide to developing survey questions:

1. Will the words be uniformly understood?
2. Does the question contain abbreviations or unconventional phrases?
3. Is the question too vague?
4. Is the question too precise?
5. Is the question biased?
6. Is the question objectionable?
7. Is the question too demanding?
8. Is it a double question?
9. Does the question have a double negative?
10. Are the answer choices mutually exclusive?
11. Have you assumed too much knowledge?
12. Has too much been assumed about respondent behavior?
13. Is the question technically accurate?
14. Is an appropriate time referent provided?
15. Can the responses be compared with existing information?
16. Are the questions too cryptic?

The use of this list as a checklist in writing survey questions can help the writer avoid the most common pitfalls in wording questionnaires.

Step 2 - Developing the Format

Once the questions have been written, the next step is to figure out how to lay them out on the page and tie them together in such a way that the questionnaire can be self-explanatory and as easy as possible to complete. While it is not possible here to describe in detail layout design, there are a number of practical considerations that should be taken into account:

- provide directions for how to answer questions;
- show clearly how to skip questions (if applicable);
- establish a vertical flow to reduce the likelihood that questions will be missed;
- use different typeface for questions, answers, and instructions;
- pre-code the responses to the maximum extent possible;
- make questions fit comfortably on each page;
- use transitions for continuity; and
- consider carefully the order of the questions.

Step 3 - Printing the Questionnaire

The client's first exposure to the look and feel of the questionnaire may be critical to ensuring a good response rate. It is very important that the questionnaire make a good first impression. It mustn't look too bulky, long, formidable, disorganized, or difficult to complete. Take into account the following:

- Make the questionnaire legible
  - -- use white or off-white paper;
  - -- use printing method that produces quality very close to the original;
  - -- use large type for visually-impaired; and
  - -- if using photo reduction, don't reduce smaller than three-fourths of the original size.
- Consider printing the questionnaire in booklet format
  - -- combined with quality paper and printing (this looks very professional); and

-- use 8-1/4" x 12-1/4" paper folded in half, as this will fit in a conventional envelope and keep mailing costs down.

- Don't print questions on the front or back pages ("cover" pages); and
- Make sure to make an adequate number of copies -- take into account follow-up mailings.

## SURVEY DISTRIBUTION

Once the questionnaire has been prepared for distribution there are still a few additional tasks involved in actually getting the survey in the mail. It is important that the survey be accompanied by a personable cover letter from the VR agency to the client, explaining the purpose of the survey. It is also important that appropriate record-keeping procedures be established to ensure accuracy in administering the survey. Finally, the surveys must be packaged and mailed out.

### Step 1 - Preparing the Cover Letter

The cover letter should be the first part of the mailout package that the client will see. It serves to introduce the survey and hopefully motivates the respondent to immediately pick up the questionnaire, fill it out, and return it. The cover letter is virtually the only opportunity for anticipating and responding to respondent questions. It must be short and to the point while still providing adequate information (see Figure 2).

The first paragraph of the cover letter should (1) explain what the survey is for and (2) convince the client that the results will be useful. The second paragraph should be used to convince the client that his or her response is important. Subsequent paragraphs should address confidentiality, tell the respondent what to do if questions arise, and extend appreciation for participation.

In addition to the body of the letter there are a few additional details that can help increase the response rate and are worth considering. The first is that dating the letter gives it an air of greater importance and gives the respondent a frame of reference of elapsed time should it become separated from the envelope before being filled out. Secondly, it is best to type the name, address and salutation (if used) individually onto each letter so that it appears personalized rather than as a typical

Figure 2

SAMPLE COVER LETTER

(Closure Survey)

Date :

Dear _____

In order to improve the effectiveness of client services, VR is asking for the opinions of some of our past VR clients. Please find enclosed a brief questionnaire regarding your feelings towards VR counselors, and the services you have received. The results from this survey will help guide the modification of VR services to make them more responsive to client needs.

Since only a small number of former VR clients are receiving this survey, each person's timely response is of great importance. Use the enclosed preaddressed envelope to make returning the completed survey easier.

All responses to the survey will be confidential. If you have any questions regarding the survey, please call _____ at _____, or write:

_____

_____

_____

VR is committed to providing useful and beneficial services to all VR clients. Your help in this effort is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

form letter. Finally, the letter should be printed onto agency letterhead (or a very good copy).

Step 2 - Setting Up the Records

Effective administration of the surveys requires that the required information be recorded systematically in an easily accessible form. The attached Survey Control Sheet provides a simple mechanism for recording all of the information needed during survey distribution (and collection) in one place.

The first step in setting up the records is to compile a listing of all members of the sample with up-to-date addresses and telephone numbers. This information is recorded on the control sheet, one for each client. Having this information on the control sheets makes it readily available for follow-up response prods later and also provides a place to record changes in addresses and phone numbers should they arise.

The next step is to clearly identify each client by recording Social Security number and case number on the control sheet. This is important for ensuring accuracy since, to protect confidentiality, no identifying information will appear on the questionnaire.

As the questionnaires are sent out, the questionnaire number from the survey sent to each client must be recorded on the control sheet to identify each questionnaire with a given client. This provides the identification necessary to merge survey data with other agency data making it possible to look at the survey data in the context of client characteristics. This is also the only way to keep track of which clients have returned surveys; information that is essential for follow-up purposes. Also essential to the follow-up procedure is the recording of the date mailed out in order to keep track of elapsed time.

This is the last of the preliminary steps. Once this record-keeping system has been set up, the surveys can be packaged and mailed out.

Step 3 - Packaging and Mailing Out the Survey

The survey package should include the survey, a cover letter, and

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Questionnaire No. _____

*(Number on Survey Control Sheet and Questionnaire must correspond)*

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CLOSURE SURVEY

### Survey Control Sheet

*To Be Completed By Agency Personnel Only*

I. Agency and Client Identification

1. Case No. /_/_/_/_/_/_/_/_/_/_/_/ 2. Closure Date __/__/__

3. Social Security No. /_/_/_/-/_/_/-/_/_/_/_/

4. Client's Name _____

5. Client's Address _____ _____
street name and number Apt. No.

_____ _____ _____
city state zip code

6. Client's Telephone No. (_____) _____ - _____

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II. Survey Control Information *(Check the boxes that apply and give the dates)*

1. Initial Questionnaire Distributed -- Date /_/_/_/_/

How: by counselor? /_/
by district office? /_/
by central office? /_/

Response Prods:

2. Reminder postcard /_/ Date /_/_/_/_/
3. Second survey form /_/ Date /_/_/_/_/
4. Telephone follow-up /_/ Date /_/_/_/_/
5. Other: _____ /_/ Date /_/_/_/_/
6. Classified as non-response /_/ Date /_/_/_/_/
7. Questionnaire Completed? /_/ Date /_/_/_/_/

How: by mail?
by telephone? Interviewer's name: _____
in person?

a return addressed envelope. The return envelope should preferrably be postage paid, as this tends to help maximize the response rate. Once again, the importance of recording questionnaire numbers on the appropriate survey control sheets cannot be overemphasized. This is usually the last step in the mail out process in conjunction with the envelope stuffing process. The materials should be folded and the envelope stuffed in such a manner that the respondent notices the cover letter first.

Experience shows that to ensure that mail reaches its destination as soon as possible after the mail out date, the best time to mail the surveys is early in the week. This avoids the weekend build up. It is also helpful to avoid holidays as much as possible.

## SURVEY COLLECTION

Most people who answer questionnaires do so almost immediately after they receive them. A questionnaire that lies unanswered for a couple of weeks is not very likely to be returned. There are many reasons why respondents may not return the questionnaires:

- The questionnaire never reached its destination because the wrong address was used.
- The questionnaire arrived at the appropriate address but was discarded without being opened because it resembled "junk" mail.
- The respondent found no convincing explanation about why it should be completed so threw it away.
- The client decided to fill out the questionnaire but temporarily laid it aside and just never got back to it.
- The questionnaire was filled out but the return address was misplaced so it was never returned.
- The client was unable, because of his or her disability, to fill out the questionnaire without assistance.

While some of these problems can be overcome by carefully preparing the survey package, there will always be individuals who do not return the questionnaire. For this reason it is important to follow the surveys with reminders or prods to those who have not responded. Berkeley Planning Associates recommends the following four step process for maximizing response rate. As will be seen, this is where the survey control sheet will be an effective tool.

### Step 1 - Two Week Reminder

Two weeks after the initial distribution, reminder post cards or letters should be mailed to clients for whom a questionnaire has not been

returned (see Figure 3). The reminder should be written not to overcome resistance, but rather to jog memories and to influence the respondents' priorities. It should be carefully worded to convey a sense of importance without sounding impatient. This can be accomplished by stating that a questionnaire was sent, stressing why the respondent is important, offering a replacement questionnaire, and providing a contact person.

To keep costs down, reminders should be sent only to those who have not responded. While some states may choose to use computerized flagging systems, this can be accomplished mechanically and quite simply through use of the control sheets. When questionnaires are returned by clients the date is recorded on the control sheet and that control sheet is pulled from the pending file and filed by closure date. All those remaining in the current month's pending file at the end of the two week period would receive a two week reminder.

Step 2 - Second Questionnaire

One week after the two week reminders have been sent out, a second questionnaire should be mailed to the remaining non-respondents. Once again this should be accompanied by a cover letter (see Figure 4). This letter should combine elements of the first cover letter and the reminder by stating that a questionnaire was mailed previously, thanking those who have already responded (in case this reminder has crossed in the mail with the response), explaining why the survey is important, stressing the importance of the individual's response and providing a contact person. If, as in the case of the reminder letter, the control sheets for those who have returned questionnaires have been pulled and filed appropriately, then those remaining in the pending file at the end of the third week would receive the second questionnaire.

Step 3 - Telephone Reminder

One week following the second survey mailing, a telephone reminder should be undertaken for those surveys still unreturned. Once again

Figure 3

SAMPLE POSTCARD REMINDER

Dear _____ Date:

Our effort to refine and improve VR services has included sending brief questionnaires to selected former VR clients. Such a questionnaire was recently sent to you and we want to emphasize how much we would appreciate your response. We encourage you to complete the questionnaire and return it to us in the preaddressed envelope as soon as possible. If you have questions or need a new questionnaire, please contact _____ at _____ or write:

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your help.

Figure 4

SAMPLE REMINDER COVER LETTER

(Closure Survey)

Date :

Dear _____

VR is committed to improving the effectiveness of client services and is asking for the opinions of past VR clients. A questionnaire was recently sent to you regarding your feelings towards VR services and counselors. Since the results from the survey will help guide the modification of VR services, your response to the questionnaire is of tremendous importance.

Please find enclosed another copy of the questionnaire. We encourage you to complete the questionnaire and return it to us in the enclosed preaddressed envelope. All responses to the survey will be confidential.

If you have already returned a completed questionnaire, please accept our gratitude. If you have questions regarding the survey, please call _____ at _____ or write:

_____

_____

_____

Thank you very much for your help.

Sincerely,

respondents should be urged gently. The focus of the telephone contact should be to determine the cause of the delay and establish whether the respondent is willing to participate. For those clients who have difficulty completing the survey themselves it may be necessary to make special arrangements.

Step 4 - Last Try

If no response is received after Step 3, the agency may elect to mail a third questionnaire (if necessary) or to complete the survey through telephone or personal interview with the client. The latter should be arranged at a mutually convenient time and place for the parties involved. The "last try" is the step most often omitted in survey implementation, especially where resources are limited and the response rate has been relatively high. In-person and telephone interviews take time and are more costly than self-administered mail-back surveys. However, omission of this step increases the tendency for sample bias. Therefore, the extent to which an agency will implement these procedures should receive careful consideration.

Surveys still unreturned or uncompleted two weeks following the telephone contact should be considered non-responses and classified as such. This allows for a total of six weeks for completing the questionnaire before it is classified as a non-response.

## DATA PREPARATION

The return of the questionnaires to the VR agency is not the completion of the survey/data collection process. Rather, the final link in the chain is the preparation of the data for analysis. Before the data can be analyzed, the questionnaires must be edited.

### Step 1 - Editing Completed Questionnaires

All completed questionnaires must be edited to ensure that the proper information is being collected, to ensure that the questionnaires have been properly completed, to ensure that information is recorded consistently and to prepare the data for keypunching.

In the process of editing, the editor reviews each and every item in the questionnaire. He or she examines all responses to make sure that the instructions were followed, that the answers are appropriate and that the appropriate number of responses is given to each question. The agency should strive to have only one or two individuals edit completed instruments. By minimizing the number of editors the consistency of the data is increased. Also problems or trends in interpreting or answering questions are quickly detected.

Editors also keep track of items with a high degree of missing data, and items with which respondents have difficulty. Knowledge of problematic variables is very important in the analysis phase.

Exhibit:

THE SURVEYS

The closure and follow-up surveys in their standardized form appear in the following pages. As mentioned previously (Instrument Development) in order to gather consistent data across states it is essential that all states ask the same questions using the same wording.

However, some states may wish to include additional questions relating to their own internal program planning and evaluation needs. Any additional questions that your agency may wish to add must be added to the end of the surveys following the standardized questions. This exposes all clients to the standardized questions in the same order, thus assuring comparable data.

Client Closure Survey

| (Column #) | |
|---|---|
| (1-3) | Questionnaire No. / / / / |
| (4) | / / (Card Number) |
| (5-14) | / / / / / / / / / / / / (Client I.D.) |

## VR CLIENT CLOSURE SURVEY

1. Are you satisfied with your overall experience with the rehabilitation program? [PLEASE CHECK ONE]

(15)
___ 1. Yes
___ 2. No
___ 9. Not sure or no opinion

2. Are you satisfied with your counselor's performance (that is, did he/she do a good job for you)? [PLEASE CHECK ONE]

(16)
___ 1. Yes
___ 2. No
___ 9. Not sure or no opinion

3. Did your counselor arrange for you to have physical restoration services, such as medical treatment, physical therapy, artificial limbs, eyeglasses, dentures, hearing aids, etc.? [PLEASE CHECK ONE]

(17)
___ 1. Yes
___ 2. No
___ 9. I don't remember

| (Column #) | |
|---|---|
| | 4. If YES, are you satisifed with these services? [PLEASE CHECK ONE] |
| (18) | ___ 1. Yes<br>___ 2. No<br>___ 9. Not sure or no opinion |
| | 5. Did your counselor arrange for you to have <u>job training</u>? [PLEASE CHECK ONE] |
| (19) | ___ 1. Yes<br>___ 2. No<br>___ 9. I don't remember |
| | 6. If YES, are you satisfied with the kind of training you received? [PLEASE CHECK ONE] |
| (20) | ___ 1. Yes<br>___ 2. No<br>___ 9. Not sure or no opinion |
| | 7. Did your counselor help you <u>look for</u> a job? [PLEASE CHECK ONE] |
| (21) | ___ 1. Yes<br>___ 2. No<br>___ 9. I don't remember |
| | 8. If YES, are you satisfied with the help you received? [PLEASE CHECK ONE] |
| (22) | ___ 1. Yes<br>___ 2. No<br>___ 9. Not sure or no opinion |

| (Column #) | |
|---|---|
| (23) | 9. Were the services or training you received from the rehabilitation program useful in helping you to perform in your present situation or in helping you get it? [PLEASE CHECK ONE]<br>___ 1. Yes<br>___ 2. No<br>___ 3. I received no services or training from the rehabilitation program<br>___ 9. I have no opinion |

Client Follow-Up Survey

| (Column #) | |
|---|---|
| (1-3) | Questionnaire No. /_/_/_/_/_/ |
| (4) | /_/ (Card Number) |
| (5-14) | /_/_/_/_/_/_/_/_/_/_/ (Client I.D.) |

VR CLIENT FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

1. Which of the following statements best describes your present work situation? [PLEASE CHECK ONLY ONE]

(15)

___ 1. I earn a wage or salary, either at a regular job or from self-employment
___ 2. I earn a wage or salary in a sheltered workshop or Business Enterprise Program (BEP)
___ 3. I am a homemaker
___ 4. I work in a family farm or business without pay
___ 5. I am not working at present
___ 6. Other (explain): _____
_____
_____

2. How much total income, if any, did you and your dependents receive last month from all sources of public welfare? [PLEASE CHECK ONLY ONE AND FILL IN THE SPACE]

(16-19)

___ We received $_____ last month
___ None[a]
___ I don't remember[a]

| (Column #) | |
|---|---|
| | 3. What were your total earnings <u>last week</u> (from a job, self-employment, sheltered workshop, or Business Enterprise Program (BEP)? |
| (20-21) | ___ I earned $ _____ last week<br>___ I am working but I don't receive a wage or salary [a]<br>___ I am not working [a]<br>___ I don't know [a] |
| | 4. What was your income <u>last month</u> from private sources other than the earnings reported in Question 3 (for example, from rents, dividends, or private insurance)? |
| (22-26) | ___ I received $ _____ last month<br>___ None [a]<br>___ I don't remember [a] |
| | 5. (Items assessing functional ability and life status; items to be determined through pretest of the Life Functioning Index (LFI). |

[a] These responses will require multicolumn codes (e.g., 0000 for "None" on Question 2, 9999 for "I don't remember" on question 2).

# Vocational Rehabilitation Program
# Standards Evaluation System

## Trainee Handbook-D:

## The Five Procedural Standards

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## THE FIVE PROCEDURAL STANDARDS

### OVERVIEW

The Procedural Standards consist of five goal-statements for the Vocational Rehabilitation program, pertaining to R-300[1] validity, compliance with key regulations, and certain aspects of case handling. These standards include:

- Standard 9: Information collected on clients by the R-300 and all data reporting systems used by RSA shall be valid, reliable, accurate, and complete.
- Standard 10: Eligibility decisions shall be based on accurate and sufficient diagnostic information, and VR shall continually review and evaluate eligibility decisions to ensure that decisions are being made in accordance with laws and regulations.
- Standard 11: VR shall ensure that eligibility decisions and client movement through the VR process occur in a timely manner appropriate to the needs and capabilities of the clients.
- Standard 12: VR shall provide an Individualized Written Rehabilitation Program for each applicable client, and VR and the client shall be accountable to each other for complying with this agreement.
- Standard 13: Counselors shall make an effort to set realistic goals for clients. Comprehensive consideration must be given to all factors in developing appropriate vocational goals such that there is a maximum of correspondence between goals and outcomes: competitive goals should have competitive outcomes and noncompetitive goals should have noncompetitive outcomes.

The Procedural Standards will be reported for a given state agency every third fiscal year. RSA will conduct the data collection and will

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[1]The R-300 is the data system which has been used by VR agencies and therefore served as the framework around which specific standards were constructed. Changes in the R-300 system may result in a need to alter certain data elements or instructions.

report the results to each state agency. The data elements for each standard consists of a number of individual information items pertaining to various aspects of the issues addressed by a given Procedural Standard. For example, the eligibility standard includes data elements on the process followed in declaring applicants ineligible, as well as data elements on the process followed for eligible applicants. Thus, RSA and state agency program managers will be presented with information on "how things are done" in the agency, with respect to the key processes embodied in each Procedural Standard. It is intended for states to use the Procedural Standards to benefit their program evaluation efforts and facilitate the improvement of services to clients. The information obtained via the Procedural Standards will form the basis for agencies to make appropriate changes in practices, where current processes are not in keeping with client interests and positive program performance.

The methodology for implementing the Procedural Standards reflects RSA's desire to allow maximum flexibility to states in the VR process, yet still ensure attention to a common set of concerns and provide sufficient data to allow for program-wide analysis of these concerns. Ideally, a uniform procedure would be followed by all states for monitoring these process areas, even though states retain differences in the ways they organize and conduct case service delivery. For example, indicators of compliance with legal requirements, such as eligibility and IWRP, should be the same for all states. All states should be asked a standard set of questions, with the resulting information being reported in a uniform manner.

Most of the Procedural Standards' data needs are best met through a careful review. Thus, a single case review process will be implemented to address the case review needs of four of the Procedural Standards. This process will use the Case Review Schedule (CRS) developed by the San Diego State RCEP IX as the basic document for Procedural Standards data collection. The CRS has already been mandated by the RSA as the standardized instrument to be used by regional RSA offices whenever they conduct case reviews. For Procedural Standards 10 (Eligibility) and 12 (IWRP), the CRS items essential to adequately assess compliance have been selected. These items make up the Modified CRS, which is considerably shorter than the full CRS. RSA could

choose either the CRS or the MCRS as the instrument for collecting Procedural Standards data.

While the CRS is an appropriate vehicle for collecting compliance data, it lacks certain items needed to assess the validity of R-300 data (Standard 9) or to assess timeliness of case service (Standard 11). For these standards, two separate instruments have been developed to complement the CRS. These two instruments are incorporated directly into the CRS to provide a unified data collection instrument.

Finally, Standard 13 on the correspondence between IWRP occupational goals and final outcome uses data from the R-300. Because the R-300 is the sole data source for this standard, progress on this standard can be reported annually.

To summarize, the Procedural Standards consist of five process-oriented goal-statements for the VR program. For Standards 9 - 12, data collection will occur in a given state agency every third year, with RSA conducting the necessary case reviews. Standard 13 uses R-300 data, and could be reported annually.

THE FIVE PROCEDURAL STANDARDS

STANDARD 9: R-300 VALIDITY

Information collected on clients by the R-300 and all data reporting systems used by RSA shall be valid, reliable, accurate, and complete.

While the VR service delivery systems need an objective data base from which to measure performance, inconsistencies and errors in reporting currently exist among and within VR program data systems. Similarly, confusion or misunderstandings over definitions exist. This Procedural Standard addresses these shortcomings by ensuring that state agencies maintain acceptable levels of validity and reliability in their reporting of R-300 and other data. This standard also assumes that careful attention to good data processing is pertinent to all of the standards. Thus, given the importance of reliable, valid, and accurate data on which to base the program's evaluation capacity, this Procedural Standard relates to the broad RSA goals of compliance, quality, and cost-effectiveness.

Reliability, accuracy, and completeness of data could be checked in several ways. While a state agency could conduct validity studies on a periodic basis, and edit checks as a part of routine data processing, this standard encompasses a specific recommended procedure for states to follow to ensure the accuracy of data recorded and submitted to RSA through the R-300. Primarily, the case review process includes an accuracy check between the case folder information, the R-300 form itself, and, if the state has a computer system, computer output listing of R-300 items selected for review. In particular, those R-300 data items which are used in computing the standard's data elements are subjected to checks of accuracy and validity through case folder documentation.

This standard uses the R-300 Verification Instrument (Section I.C of the Modified Case Review Schedule) as its data source. Table 2 shows the R-300 items which are checked using the R-300 Verification Instrument.

Table 2

R-300 Items Checked Using the R-300 Verification Instrument[a]

| | |
|---|---|
| Referral date | Monthly amount of public assistance received at closure |
| Closure date | Occupation at closure |
| Social Security number | DOT code for that occupation |
| SSDI status at referral | Outcome status (08, 26, 28, 30) |
| SSI status at referral | Reason for nonrehabilitated closure |
| Major (primary) disabling condition | Total cost of all case services |
| Secondary disability | Total cost of all case services provided in rehabilitation facilities |
| Work status at referral | Total cost of case services charged to Social Security Trust Funds |
| Earnings the week prior to referral | Total cost of case services charged to Supplemental Security Income Funds |
| Receipt or nonreceipt of public assistance at referral | Receipt or nonreceipt and cost status of the following services: |
| Type(s) of public assistance received at referral (SSDI, SSI-Aged, SSI-Blind, SSI-Disabled, AFDC, Other) | Diagnostic and evaluation; |
| Monthly amount of public assistance received at referral | Restoration (physical or mental); |
| Length of time, prior to referral, during which the client received public assistance | College or university; |
| Appropriateness of the Federal Special Program Identification checks (TF, Vet, MAW, PO, WIN, SEC4, SF, SD) | Other academic elementary or high school; |
| SSDI status at closure | Business school or college; |
| SSI status at closure | Vocational school; |
| Work status at closure | On-the-job training; |
| Weekly earnings at closure | Personal and vocational adjustment; |
| Receipt or nonreceipt of public assistance at closure | Miscellaneous training; |
| Type(s) of public assistance received at closure (SSDI, SSI-Aged, SSI-Blind, SSI-Disabled, AFDC, Other) | Maintenance; |
| | Other services; |
| | Services to other family members |

[a]The R-300 Verification Instrument appears in Section I.C. of the Modified Case Review Schedule.

STANDARD 10: ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility decisions shall be based on accurate and sufficient diagnostic information, and VR shall continually review and evaluate eligibility decisions to ensure that decisions are being made in accordance with laws and regulations.

The determination of an applicant's qualifications for eligibility is a critical point in the VR process for both the client and the agency. This standard seeks to protect the client's interests by requiring that state agencies install procedures for monitoring eligibility decisions in a sample of cases. This system would ensure that all decisions are appropriate, that they are in compliance with legal requirements, and that they are supported by the proper diagnostic information. Standard 10 pertains to two broad RSA goals. First, inasmuch as the eligibility determination process rests on a legal footing, the standard pertains to the goal of legislative compliance. Second, it pertains to the goal of cost-effectiveness, since it is a misuse of money to serve ineligible persons, particularly if other, eligible clients are turned away due to an incorrect determination of eligibility. Thus, a procedural standard for the review of eligibility determination implies concern for the appropriateness of this decision-making process. Information from this review will address two issues: (1) that clients who are not eligible for VR services not be accepted for services, and (2) that clients who are eligible are indeed accepted.

While monitoring and review of eligibility decisions by supervising counselors or managers will provide a check on that determination, the actual procedures utilized in providing this supervision will not be monitored. Consequently, states will be allowed to retain flexibility in establishing their monitoring practices. Although cross-checks on impending eligibility decisions are important, they are not a requirement for this standard.

The Modified Case Review Schedule (MCRS) serves as the data source for this standard. Table 3 shows the MCRS items used to address Standard 10; the table is organized by the various relevant sections of the MCRS.

Table 3

Modified Case Review Schedule (MCRS) Items Used

for Standard 10 (Eligibility)

SECTION II: EVALUATION OF REHABILITATION POTENTIAL

A: Preliminary Diagnostic Study - Status 02

Does the preliminary diagnostic study...

4. include an appraisal of the current general health status of the client?

5. include a psychiatric or psychological examination in all cases of mental or emotional disorder?

6. include such examinations and diagnostic studies as necessary to:

    a. determine eligibility?

    b. determine the need for extended evaluation?

7. place primary emphasis upon the determination of the client's potential for achieving a vocational goal?

8. support the determination that the client has a medically-recognized physical or mental disability?

9. support the determination that the medically-recognized disability constitutes a substantial handicap to employment for the client?

10. support the determination that VR services may reasonably be expected to benefit the client in terms of employability?

11. support the determination that an extended evaluation is necessary to determine that VR services may reasonably be expected to benefit the client in terms of employability?

Table 3 (continued)

SECTION II: EVALUATION OF REHABILITATION POTENTIAL

B: Extended Evaluation - Status 06

Does the case record...

14. contain a certification for extended evaluation to determine rehabilitation potential?

Does the IWRP for extended evaluation (state form)...

19. present the general basis for a determination that an extended evaluation of rehabilitation potential is necessary to make a determination of eligibility?

33. show that a thorough assessment of the client's progress was made at least once in every 90-day period during the provision of services under the extended evaluation?

Does the case record...

40. contain a certification of eligibility for the continuance of VR services?

42a. show that the decision to terminate services was made in full consultation with the client, or as appropriate, with the parent, guardian, or other representative?

42d. show that the provision was made for a periodic review, at least annually, of the ineligibility decision?

Table 3 (continued)

SECTION III: ELIGIBILITY - STATUS 10

Does the certification of eligibility...

1c. indicate that the client has met the basic eligibility requirements?

How well does the counselor documentation in the case record...

3. establish the presence of a physical or mental disability with necessary medical, psychiatric, psychological, and other information?

7. show that the substantial handicap to employment exists, even though the client is employed, because the client is unable to obtain a gainful occupation consistent with the client's capacities and abilities?

8. show the likelihood of VR services enabling the client to achieve vocational goals consistent with the client's capacities and abilities?

Table 3 (continued)

SECTION VII: TERMINATION OF CASES - STATUS 08
(Numbers in parentheses indicate Case Review item numbers)

CASE CLOSED STATUS 08 FROM 00/02 - INTERVENING REASONS

Does the case record...

(2) document specific reasons for the closure action?

(5) show that the client, or as appropriate, the parent, guardian, or other representative, was advised of the reasons for closure and the closure action taken?

CASE CLOSED STATUS 08 FROM 00/02 - INELIGIBILITY

Does the certification of ineligibility..

(6a) indicate the date of certification?

(6c) include the reasons for the determination of ineligibility?

Does the case record...

(7) show that the client does not have a medically recognized physical or mental disability?

(8) show that the client does not have a substantial handicap to employment?

(9) show that beyond any reasonable doubt the client is not expected to benefit in terms of employability from VR services?

contain data supporting the ineligibility determination, including:

(10a) a summary of medical and other case data obtained during the preliminary diagnostic study?

(10d) documentation of a review of the ineligibility determination not later than 12 months following such determination

(11) show that the ineligibility determination was made only after full consultation with the client, or as appropriate, with the parent, guardian, or other representative?

(12) document that the client was notified in writing of the closure action taken?

document that the client was informed in writing of client rights and remedies, including:

(13a) the right to adminisrative review and fair hearing?

(13c) the right to participate in the annual review of the ineligibility determination.

(14) document any action and decision involving the client's request for an administrative review of agency action or fair hearing?

CASE CLOSED STATUS 08 FROM 06 - INELIGIBILITY

Does the certification of ineligibility...

(17a) indicate the date of certification?

(17c) include the reasons for the determination of ineligibility?

Does the case record...

(18) show that beyond any reasonable doubt the client cannot be expected to benefit in terms of employability from VR services?

(20) contain the rationale for the ineligibility determination as an amendment to the IWRP?

(21) show that the ineligibility determination was made only after full consultation with the client, or as appropriate with the parent, guardian, or other representative?

(23) document that the client was informed in writing of the closure action taken?

(24) document any action and decision involving the client's request for an administrative review of agency action or fair hearing?

(25) document that the ineligibility determination was reviewed not later than 12 months following such determination?

Table 3 (continued)

SECTION VII: TERMINATION OF CASES - STATUSES 30 and 28

Does the certification of ineligibility...

28a. indicate the date of certification?

28c. include the reasons for the determination of ineligibility?

Does the case record...

34. contain the rationale for the ineligibility determination as an amendment to the program?

35. show that the ineligibility determination was made only after full consultation with the client, or as appropriate, with the parent, guardian, or other representative?

36. document that the client was notified in writing of the closure action taken?

Does the case record show that the client was informed in writing of...

37a. the right to administrative review and fair hearing?

37b. the right to participate in the annual review of the ineligibility determination?

Does the case record...

38. document any action and decision involving the client's request for an administrative review of agency action or fair hearing?

39. document that the determination that the client was no longer eligible was reviewed not later than 12 months following such determination?

STANDARD 11: TIMELINESS

VR shall ensure that eligibility decisions and client movement through the VR process occur in a timely manner appropriate to the needs and capabilities of the clients.

This standard seeks to avoid delays in the VR process that are likely to impede or hinder successful rehabilitation of the client. Rather than set a performance standard using time-in-status to define "undue delay," this Procedural Standard requires that each state have a monitoring or flaging mechanism for cases remaining in statuses over a given length of time, and a procedure to evaluate the appropriateness of any case delay. Many of the state VR agencies already have variations of such a system in place.

This standard pertains to the RSA goal of providing quality case services, for two reasons. First, one aspect of the quality of a client's service experience is the speed with which his or her case is handled. The client's perception of his/her treatment by VR can have an impact on his/her attitude toward VR and about the usefulness of participation in VR. Second, research on successful rehabilitation outcomes has suggested a relationship between timeliness and success, a relationship that may be a consequence of the client's perceptions as discussed above.

The issue of timely case movement or "undue delays" has been one of long discussion and controversy. While there is literature to support the correspondence between the time it takes for certain processes, such as the eligibility decision, to take place and outcome, there have also been questions about interrater reliability in the use of case reviews to judge timeliness. Nevertheless, an overall review of timely case movement on a client-by-client basis is best handled through case review, if items can be identified which have good interrater reliability.

Much effort has gone into establishing standards for the timeliness of case service progress. Attempts to monitor the timeliness of service provision by way of a standard on "undue delay," however, have been hampered by several problems. The first is that "undue delay" means different things to different people. While the current standards use the approach of arbitrary time periods to define "timely" case movement (i.e., eight months for timely eligibility decisions; 22 months for timely completion of the VR process, etc.), this approach has been widely criticized for its lack of

sensitivity to the legitimate differences in individual cases. A complex case, perhaps involving long-term educational services, might well require more than 22 months, but may not constitute an unnecessary delay in the service process.

In response to this criticism, other approaches to objective measurement have been undertaken. For example, recording planned initiation and completion dates for each service and monitoring compliance with the schedule has also been considered as a way to obtain all the information necessary for a careful analysis of the timeliness of case movement without identifying a particular time period as more or less appropriate. This alternative, however, has been critized for its cumbersome and time-consuming implementation process.

Subjective judgements of timeliness, while allowing for the reviewer to assess each case on its individual merits, have been vulnerable to criticisms of unreliability in application. Case reviewers might well differ in judgments as to the cause of a delay and, therefore, differ in their interpretation of whether the agency should be held accountable for the delay. One reviewer might view a delay in the handling of a client's case as unnecessary and, therefore, the responsibility of the agency in question, while another reviewer might perceive the delay as stemming from a lack of client motivation or actions by an outside vendor and, therefore, not the agency's responsibility. To correct these problems, a new timeliness assessment instrument has been developed which, while relying upon reviewer judgment, divides case assessments of timeliness into two segments: first, a notation of whether a delay has occurred in terms of time lapse between necessary activities; and second, an assessment of the reasons for the lapse. The relevant questions are included in the MCRS and concern critical phases of case progress -- eligibility determination, development of service plan, service delivery, and termination. In addition, the Timeliness Assessment instrument allows for notation of whether a case was handled with "undue speed": that is, if the case moved too fast, in the reviewer's judgment, given the circumstances of the case.

The Timeliness Assessment Instrument is included as Section VIII of the Modified Case Review Schedule (MCRS). Table 4 shows the information items obtained for each reviewed case by the Timeliness Assessment Instrument.

Table 4

Information Items Obtained by the Timeliness Assessment Instrument for Reviewed Cases[a]

| |
|---|
| 1. Was the case handled in a timely manner (i.e., without undue speed or undue delay)? |
| 2. If undue speed: |
| a. Reasons for judging the case as moving too fast. |
| 3. If undue delay: |
| a. Were the reasons for delay documented in the clients' case record? |
| b. Reasons for delay. |

[a]The Timeliness Assessment Instrument appears in Section VIII of the Modified Case Review Schedule.

STANDARD 12: IWRP

VR shall provide an Individualized Written Rehabilitation Program for each applicable client, and VR and the client shall be accountable to each other for complying with this agreement.

Several aspects of the Individualized Written Rehabilitation Program are addressed in this Procedural Standard, including: (a) compliance with the requirement that an IWRP be fully developed for clients accepted for services or extended evaluation; (b) assurance of the protection of client rights and client awareness of the remedies available for mitigating dissatisfaction; (c) joint client/counselor development of the job goal and the service plan; (d) mutual client/counselor responsibility for follow-through on the agreement and annual review of its progress and appropriateness; and (e) the appropriate handling of plan revisions.

This standard bears a relation to the RSA goals of ensuring compliance and quality case services. Obviously, given the regulations mandating provision of an IWRP to all accepted clients, this standard's relation to the compliance goal is clear. While the regulations concerning the IWRP stipulate compliance with the provisions of the law, elevating the issue to the level of a procedural standard will ensure compliance with the legislative intent of the IWRP.

Inclusion of this standard could be justified simply on the basis of the strong regulation regarding compliance with the IWRP provisions of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. However, perhaps an even more important reason to include this standard is the fact that research has shown a positive association between compliance with the IWRP requirements and successful outcomes of the VR process. Since research has supported the premises underpinning the IWRP by showing that the process and the possession of the IWRP affect client outcomes positively, adherence to the IWRP requirements becomes a powerful norm for quality case management in VR, as well as a protection of client interests and rights.

The Modified Case Review Schedule serves as the data source for this standard. Table 5 shows the MCRS items used to address Standard 12.

Table 5

Modified Case Review Schedule (MCRS) Items Used

for Standard 12 (IWRP)

SECTION II: EVALUATION OF REHABILITATION POTENTIAL

B: Extended Evaluation - Status 06

18. Is there an IWRP for extended evaluation in the case record?

Does the IWRP for extended evaluation (state form)...

19. present the general basis for a determination that an extended evaluation of rehabilitation potential is necessary to make a determination of eligibility?

20. Set forth the terms and conditions for the provision of service, including:

    a. client responsibilities in carrying out the program, such as attendance, cooperation, etc.?

    b. the extent of client participation in the cost of services?

21. document that the client was informed of client rights and remedies, including:

    a. the right to be fully consulted regarding any changes or amendments in the rehabilitation program?

    b. the right to administrative review in case of dissatisfaction with services?

    d. the right to participate in the annual review of the program?

    e. the right to participate in the annual review of the ineligibility decision?

22. reflect that the IWRP for extended evaluation was maintained as a separate part of the case record?

23. show that the client received a copy of the IWRP and substantial amendments?

26. indicate that the program was developed and amended with the client's participation, or as appropriate, with the parent, guardian, or other representative?

28. state the intermediate rehabilitation objectives?

Table 5 (continued)

SECTION II.B (continued)

Does the IWRP for extended evaluation (state form)...

29. state the VR services to be provided which are necessary for the determination of rehabilitation potential?

30. contain the projected date for the initiation of each service?

31. contain the anticipated duration for each service planned?

32. provide the projected time within which rehabilitation objectives may be achieved?

33. show that a thorough assessment of the client's progress was made at least once in every 90-day period during the provision of services under the extended evaluation?

34. state the objective criteria upon which an evaluation of the client's progress is based?

35. state the procedure by which the client is evaluated?

36. contain a schedule for the periodic review and progress evaluation?

37. contain a record of the results of scheduled reviews and progress evaluations?

38. show that a formal, annual review has been conducted if the IWRP has achieved at least first anniversary status?

39. document the client's views, or, as appropriate, the views of the parent, guardian, or other representative concerning the objectives and VR services being provided?

Does the case record...

42a. show that the decision to terminate services was made in full consultation with the client, or as appropriate, with the parent, guardian, or other representative?

42b. show that the rationale for the decision to terminate services was recorded as a certified amendment to the IWRP for extended evaluation?

42c. show that a certification of ineligibility was then executed?

42d. show that the provision was made for a periodic review, at least annually, of the ineligibility decision?

Table 5 (continued)

SECTION II.B (continued)

Questions 43 through 51 have two parts:

Item B: Does the case record document that the service was planned for the client?

Item C: Does the case record document that the service was given to the client?

Each item is asked in reference to the following services (keyed to CRS question numbers).

43. Diagnostic and Related Services
44. Counseling and Guidance
45. Physical Restoration
46. Mental Restoration
47. Vocational and Other Training
48. Maintenance
49. Transporation
50. Services to the Family
51. Specialized Services for Blind, Deaf, Severe Disabilities
52. Telecommunications
53. Occupational Licenses, Tools, Equipment
54. Other Goods and Services

Table 5 (continued)

SECTION V: INDIVIDUALIZED WRITTEN REHABILITATION PROGRAM - STATUS 12 AND ABOVE

1. Is there an IWRP in the case record?

Does the IWRP (state form)...

2. present the general basis for a determination of eligibility?

3. set forth the terms and conditions for the provision of services, including:

   a. client responsibilities in carrying out the program, such as cooperation, attendance, etc.?

   b. the extent of client participation in the cost of services?

4. document that the client was informed of client rights and remedies, including:

   a. the right to be fully consulted regarding any changes or amendments in the rehabilitation program?

   b. the right to administrative review in case of dissatisfaction with services?

   d. the right to participate in the annual review of the program?

   e. the right to participate in the annual review of the ineligibility decision?

5. reflect that the IWRP was maintained as a separate part of the case record?

6. show that the client received a copy of the IWRP and substantial amendments?

9. indicate that the program was developed and amended with the client's participation or, as appropriate with the parent, guardian, or other representative?

11. place primary emphasis on the determination and achievement of a vocational goal?

12. state the long-range employment goal?

13. state the intermediate rehabilitation objectives?

Table 5 (continued)

SECTION V (continued)

Does the IWRP (state form)...

14. state the specific VR services to be provided to achieve the intermediate objectives and the employment goal?

15. contain the projected date for the initiation of each service?

16. contain the anticipated duration for each service planned?

17. provide the projected time within which rehabilitation objectives and goals may be achieved?

18. state the objective criteria upon which an evaluation of the client's progress toward an employability goal is based?

19. state the procedure by which the client is evaluated?

20. contain a schedule for the periodic reviews and progress evaluations?

21. contain a record of the results of the scheduled reviews and evaluations?

22. show that a formal, annual review has been conducted, if the IWRP has achieved at least first anniversary status?

23. document the client's views, or as appropriate, the views of the parent, guardian, or other representative concerning the goals, objectives, and VR services being provided?

Table 5 (continued)

SECTION V (continued)

Does the case record...

24a. show that the decision to terminate services was made in full consultation with the client or as appropriate, with the parent, guardian, or other representative?

24b. show that the rationale for the decision to terminate services was recorded as a certified amendment to the IWRP?

24c. show that a certification of ineligibility was then executed?

24d. show that the provision was made for a periodic review, at least annually, of the ineligibility decision?

25. contain a closure statement as an amendment to the program for a case closed rehabilitated?

Does the closure statement...

25a. a description of the basis upon which the client was determined to be rehabilitated?

26. Is there an amended IWRP for Post Employment Services?

Table 5 (continued)

SECTION VI: DELIVERY OF SERVICES - STATUSES 14, 16, 18, 20, 22 and 32

Questions 1-14 have two parts:

Item B: Does the case record document that the service was planned for the client?

Item C: Does the case record document that the service was given to the client?

Each item is asked in reference to the following services (keyed to CRS question numbers).

Services:

1. Evaluation and Diagnostic Services
2. Counseling and Guidance
3. Physical Restoration
4. Mental Restoration
5. Vocational and Other Training
6. Maintenance
7. Transportation
8. Services to the Family
9. Specialized Services for Blind, Deaf, Severe Disabilities
10. Telecommunications
11. Occupational Licenses, Tools, Equipment
12. Other Goods and Services
13. Placement
14. Post-Employment

Table 5 (continued)

SECTION VII: TERMINATION OF CASES - STATUSES 30 and 28

Does the case record...

34. contain the rationale for the ineligibility determination as an amendment to the program?[a]

35. show that the ineligibility determination was made only after full consultation with the client, or as appropriate, with the parent, guardian, or other representative?[b]

[a]This is the same working as used in item 20 (not shown) pertaining to clients closed 08 from 06; except that the work "IWRP" is substituted for "program."

[b]This is the same wording as used in Item 22 (not shown) pertaining to clients closed 08 from 06

STANDARD 13: GOAL PLANNING

Counselors shall make an effort to set realistic goals for clients. Comprehensive consideration must be given to all factors in developing appropriate vocational goals such that there is a maximum of correspondence between goals and outcomes: competitive goals should have competitive outcomes and noncompetitive goals should have noncompetitive outcomes.

Competitive employment may not be the appropriate placement for all clients. Nevertheless, VR regulations require that all placements be into "gainful activity" and that placements be consistent with the clients' "capacities and abilities," whether in competitive, sheltered, or noncompetitive employment.

There is much speculation in the field over the abuse of "homemaker" and "unpaid family worker" categories, specifically regarding the use of these categories to ensure success rather than because the placement is appropriate. While maximizing the proportion of successful closures (as captured in the Performance Standard 3) is important to VR, it does not ensure that noncompetitive placements are suitable for the client. This standard addresses the concern that noncompetitive closure categories not be used to salvage "successes" for clients who were unsuccessful in their planned competitive goals.

However, this standard is not intended to lock counselors and their clients into the goals set out in the original IWRP. Such an effect would be a misapplication of the IWRP process. The IWRP is intended to be a statement of a realistically attainable goal which, if necessary, can be modified for a variety of valid reasons as the client progresses through the VR process.

As such, state agencies should not use the standard to overemphasize the importance of matching the outcome to the goal. This would serve as a disincentive to setting ambitious (i.e., competitive employment) goals in the original IWRP, and would reduce the flexibility of the counselor in refining the goal in response to a client's progress. Instead, the results should be used in conjunction with data on client characteristics and services to investigate how counselors can be more effective in the task of "fitting" clients' potentials to feasible outcomes. In this way, the standard is used appropriately to facilitate effective goal-planning.

Standard 13 uses four variations on a common theme as data elements:

(i) $\frac{\text{\# of 26 closures with competitive goal AND competitive outcome}}{\text{\# of 26 closures}}$

(ii) $\frac{\text{\# of 26 closures with competitive goal BUT noncompetitive outcome}}{\text{\# of 26 closures}}$

(iii) $\frac{\text{\# of 26 closures with noncompetitive goal AND noncompetitive outcome}}{\text{\# of 26 closures}}$

(iv) $\frac{\text{\# of 26 closures with noncompetitive goal BUT competitive outcome}}{\text{\# of 26 closures}}$

The RSA-300 provides the data necessary to address this standard and, consequently, it can be reported annually.

## COMPUTING THE PROCEDURAL STANDARDS DATA ELEMENTS

The data elements for the Procedural Standards consist, for the most part, of individual information items pertaining to specific aspects of the standard in question. In the Procedural Standards reports, these information items will be presented in terms of a series of "percentage achieved" scores; for example, the percent of reviewed case records which "document that the client was informed of client rights and remedies, including the right to be fully consulted regarding any changes or amendments in the rehabilitation program" (MCRS, Item V.4.a, used for Standard 12). Likewise, all other items from the MCRS will be computed and reported as a "percentage achieved" score.[1] With this, program managers will be able to see the extent to which an agency is in compliance (or has valid R-300 data, or serves its clients in a timely manner) in terms of a number of separate indicators. This will allow program managers to pinpoint specific problems occurring in the agency's case-handling and data-recording processes.

The one exception to the "percentage achieved" method occurs on Standard 13. As noted in the discussion of that standard, its data elements consist of four similar ratios, each of which compare clients' IWRP goals to their ultimate outcomes.

Given the straightforward interpretation of the Procedural Standards data elements, the instructions for computing the data elements can be stated simply:

1) collect the necessary data; and
2) compute the percentages, using valid cases only.

The only remaining task is to specify the information items used for the Procedural Standards. Table 6 provides the specifications. The table lists the Procedural Standards (and, for Standard 13, the four data elements), the data source and item specifications for the data items and instructions for completing the data items.

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[1] As with the Performance Standards data elements, the "percentage achieved" scores must be computed using valid cases only. In the example given above, for instance, we would divide the number of cases for which the case record documented that the client had been "informed of rights and remedies regarding IWRP changes," by the number of clients reaching Status 12. All other cases are "invalid" (for this particular data element) and are not to be used in computing the percentage score.

Table 6

Summary of Standards, Data Sources, and Data Specifications for the VR Program Procedural Standards

| Standard | Data Source | Data Specifications |
|---|---|---|
| 9. R-300 Validity<br>Information collected on clients by the R-300 and all data reporting systems used by RSA shall be valid, reliable, accurate, and complete. | Modified Case Review Schedule | Section I.C (R-300 Verification Instrument) |
| 10. Eligibility<br>Eligibility decisions shall be based on accurate and sufficient diagnostic information, and VR shall continually review and evaluate eligibility decisions to ensure that decisions are being made in accordance with laws and regulations. | Modified Case Review Schedule | Section II.A.: 4-11<br>Section II.B.: 14, 19, 33, 40, 42a, 42d<br>Section III: 1c, 3, 7, 8<br>Section VII: 2, 5, 6a, 6c, 7, 8, 9, 10a, 10d, 11, 12, 13a, 13c, 14, 17a, 17c, 18, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 28a, 28c, 34, 35, 36, 37a, 37b, 38, 39 |
| 11. Timeliness<br>VR shall ensure that eligibility decisions and client movement through the VR process occur in a timely manner appropriate to the needs and capabilities of the clients. | Modified Case Review Schedule | Section VIII.A and VIII.B (Timeliness Assessment Instrument) |
| 12. IWRP<br>VR shall provide an Individualized Written Rehabilitation Program for each applicable client and VR and the client shall be accountable to each other for complying with this agreement. | Modified Case Review Schedule | Section II.B: 18, 19, 20a, 20b, 21a, 21b, 21d, 21e, 22, 23, 26, 28-39, 42a, 42b, 42c, 42d, 43-54B, 43-54C<br>Section V: 1, 2, 3a, 3b, 4a, 4b, 4d, 4e, 5, 6, 9, 11-23, 24a, 24b, 24c, 24d, 25a, 26<br>Section VI: 1-14B, 1-14C<br>Section VII: 20, 22, 34, 35 |

Table 6 (continued)

| Standard | Data Source | Data Specifications |
|---|---|---|
| 13. Goal Planning<br><br>Counselors shall make an effort to set realistic goals for clients. Comprehensive consideration must be given to all factors in developing appropriate vocational goals such that there is a maximum of correspondence between goals and outcomes: competitive goals should have competitive outcomes and noncompetitive goals should have noncompetitive outcomes.<br><br>Data Elements:<br>(i) # of 26 closures with competitive goal AND competitive outcome / # of 26 closures<br>(ii) # of 26 closures with competitive goal BUT noncompetitive outcome / # of 26 closures<br>(iii) # of 26 closures with noncompetitive goal AND noncompetitive outcome / # of 26 closures<br>(iv) # of 26 closures with noncompetitive goal BUT competitive outcome / # of 26 closures | RSA-300:<br>Work Status of IWRP Goal<br><br>Work Status at Closure<br><br># 26 closures | <br>Item 3.B [Competitive employment = codes 1 (wage and salary workers) and 3 (self-employed, not BEP)]<br><br>Item 4.1 [Competitive employment = same as for Item 3.B]<br><br>Item 4.P.2 (total number) |

# Vocational Rehabilitation Program
# Standards Evaluation System

## Trainee Handbook-E:

## Introduction to the
## Modified Case Review Schedule (MCRS)

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE MODIFIED CASE REVIEW SCHEDULE

### OVERVIEW

The Case Review Schedule (CRS), designed by the Rehabilitation Counselor Education Program (RCEP) at San Diego State University, can be used to determine if state VR programs are providing services consistent with the federal regulations and guidelines mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Berkeley Planning Associates, under contract to the Rehabilitation Services Administration to develop an evaluation standards system, used a modified version of this case review instrument to assess selected procedures.

Five of the 13 program standards are "process" or "procedural" in nature; of these, four relate to case reviews:

- Standard 9: Information collected on clients by the R-300[1] and all data reporting systems used by RSA shall be valid, reliable, accurate, and complete.
- Standard 10: Eligibility decisions shall be based upon accurate and sufficient diagnostic information, and VR shall continually review and evaluate eligibility decisions to ensure that decisions are being made in accordance with laws and regulations.
- Standard 11: VR shall ensure that eligibility decisions and client movement through the VR process occur in a timely manner appropriate to the needs and capabilities of the clients.
- Standard 12: VR shall provide an individualized written rehabilitation program for each applicable client, and VR and the client shall be accountable to each other for complying with this agreement.

The fifth Procedural Standard, Standard 13, pertains to the setting of "realistic" goals for VR clients, consistent with their capabilities and abilities

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[1]The R-300 is the data system which has been used by VR agencies and therefore served as the framework around which specific standards were constructed. Changes in the R-300 system may result in a need to alter certain standards or instructions.

whether this means setting competitive employment goals or sheltered or non-competitive employment goals. The data elements necessary to address this goal are included in the R-300 system and consequently will not be discussed in this guide. A review of this standard and its corresponding data elements is found in "An Overview to the Five Procedural Standards," a companion document to this guide.

The Case Review Schedule as modified (primarily item deletions) by BPA can be used to verify agencies' compliance with Standards 10 and 12, the standards regarding eligibility and the IWRP. BPA designed two new sections for inclusion in the Modified Case Review Schedule to address Procedural Standards 9 and 11. These two additions are:

- The R-300 Verification, designed to assess the degree to which information submitted to RSA on critical items of the R-300 (defined as items used in the calculation of Performance Standards' data elements) was corroborated by casefile information, in order to respond to Standard 9; and
- The Timeliness Assessments, designed to link subjective assessments of the timeliness of case movement to objective data on the length of time spent in various statuses by different disability types, thereby generating a data pool from which accountable parameters for times-in-status could be drawn, in order to respond to Standard 11.

Whether administered by the states or by the Regional Rehabilitation Services Administration, the training of case reviewers will emphasize all aspects of the case review process to ensure consistency within states and across states in collecting the data. Only the smallest margin for self-interpretation of the Modified Case Review Schedule will be necessary following the thorough training and explanation of each item on the MCRS. By integrating the R-300 Verification and the Timeliness Assessment into the MCRS, the process of examining case files can become more efficient. Also, the MCRS includes only those items which directly relate to compliance with eligibility and IWRP standards, as well as items relating to supportive evaluation and, therefore, is the most compact instrument possible for fully verifying compliance with Procedural Standards, and allowing for the investigation into reasons for problematic performance.

## DATA ELEMENTS IN THE MODIFIED CASE REVIEW SCHEDULE

As part of its project to revise the VR Program Standards, Berkeley Planning Associates (BPA) reviewed the Case Review Schedule (CRS) developed by the San Diego State University RCEP IX, and selected those items needed to adequately address Standards 10 (Eligibility) and 12 (IWRP). In addition, items were selected which were felt to be of use in the problem identification stages of the decision-support system. Finally, BPA developed two new instruments -- the R-300 Verification Instrument and the Timeliness Assessment Instrument -- to address the Procedural Standards not already covered by the CRS. BPA merged those two new instruments with the items from the existing CRS -- selected to address Standards 10 and 12, and the problem identification activity -- to form a new Modified Case Review Schedule (MCRS). The MCRS serves as the unified data source for Standards 9 - 12. Below, we briefly describe each of the sections of the MCRS, identifying their specific use in the Procedural Standards and the information they elicit. A summary of the relationship of each section to each of four relevant standards is presented in Table 2.

### Sections I.A and I.B: Identifying Information and Significant Case Data

These sections provide information to identify the client (e.g., his or her case number) for use in analyzing the other MCRS data and for merging the data with other documents (such as the client's R-300). As well, Section I.B records certain singificant dates relevant to the client's program experience (e.g., date of service initiation). These are used as supplemental information for Standards 9 - 12.

### Section I.C: R-300 Vertification Instrument

The R-300 Verification instrument is designed to respond to Standard 9. It assesses the degree to which information submitted to RSA on critical items of the R-300 was corroborated by casefile information. All of the data items on the R-300 Verification instrument are necessary to ensure the integrity of the data source on which many of the Performance Standards' data elements are based. One of the purposes of Standard 9 is to verify the R-300 information such that users of the R-300 data can have confidence in

Table 2

Summary Table of MCRS Data Sections

And Their Relationship to Specific Standards

| MCRS Data Sections | Data for Standard 9 | Data for Standard 10 | Data for Standard 11 | Data for Standard 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Section I.A: Identifying Information | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Section I.B : Significant Case Data | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Section I.C: R-300 Verification Instrument | ✓ | | | |
| Section II.A: Evaluation - Status 02 | | ✓ | | |
| Section II.B: Extended Evaluation - Status 10 | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Section III: Eligibility - Status 10 | | | | ✓ |
| Section IV: Evaluation - Problem Identification | | ✓ | | |
| Section V: IWRP - Status 12 | | | | ✓ |
| Section VI: Delivery of Services -- Statuses 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 23 | | | | ✓ |
| Section VII: Termination of Services | | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Section VIII: Timliness Assessment Instrument | | | ✓ | |

the accuracy of the data reported to the states, the department administration, and the Congress. In the Procedural Standards, "verification of accuracy" refers to a manual confirmation procedure intended to ensure that file information supports and corroborates the R-300 documents.

Section II.A: Evaluation of Rehabilitation Potential: Preliminary Diagnostic Study - Status 02

This section, used for Standard 10, assesses the extent to which the case record documents the occurrence of the various activities needed to conduct an effective preliminary diagnostic study. This study, completed during the application phase, should contain all of the information necessary to make a reasonable assessment of a client's eligibility for VR services. Among these necessary pieces of information are all relevant medical and psychiatric examinations, and other evidence that supports the client's need and eligibility for rehabilitation services. Without this information, agencies will not be able to select the disabled individuals who can most benefit from available -- but limited -- VR services.

Section II.B: Evaluation of Rehabilitation Potential: Extended Evaluation - Status 06

Section II.B is used for Standards 10 and 12, and for problem identification. In regards to Standard 10 (Eligibility), Section II.B seeks documentation that the state agency has followed proper procedure in placing applicants into extended evaluation, status 06. In particular, the concerns are that case records include:

- a certification for extended evaluation to determine rehabilitation potential;
- the basis for the need for extended evaluation;
- evidence of the occurrence of thorough assessments of progress at least every 90 days; and
- documentation of the eligibility decision resulting from extended evaluation.

Provision of this information helps ensure that extended evaluation is used only when appropriate, that the client moves through extended evaluation in a timely manner, and that the minimal recording needs for Status 06 are maintained.

In regards to Standard 12 (IWRP), this section seeks to document that the IWRP's for clients placed into extended evaluation contain all of the information required under Status 06. In this context, the concerns of the Procedural Standards are that IWRP's for cases entering 06 do the following:

- define the terms and conditions for the provision of services;
- document that the client was informed of specific rights, including the right to participate in the development of the program;
- specify a vocational goal and a timeframe for its achievement;
- specify evaluation procedures and criteria;
- document the final eligibility decision and, for those clients closed as ineligible:
  - -- document that the client participated in the decision; and
  - -- document that provision was made for periodic review.

Provision of this information helps ensure adherance to the IWRP provisions, and helps ensure that clients move through Status 06 in a timely manner and are aware of their rights to continued services or review if declared ineligible.

Section III: Eligibility - Status 10

While it is important to document in the preliminary diagnostic study the extent to which applicants meet the basic eligibility criteria, it is even more important to ensure that all clients accepted for services meet all of the requirements for eligibility. The purpose of Section III is to demonstrate compliance with Standard 12 by documenting that a certification of eligibility was completed for each accepted client, and that the case record confirms:

- the existence of a disability;
- the existence of a substantial handicap to employment; and
- the likelihood that VR services will benefit the clients.

Section IV: Evaluation of Rehabilitation Potential: Thorough Diagnostic Study -- Status 02 and 10

This section is used solely for problem identification. It includes questions on the quality and scope of the thorough diagnostic study.

Section V: Individualized Written Rehabilitation Program - Status 12

Section V is used for Standard 12 (IWRP). In a sense, the purpose of the IWRP is to establish an alliance between the agency and the client for the provision of certain services toward the achievement of a specific vocational goal. As such, it is important that the IWRP contains all the information necessary to establish such an alliance. Section V documents, among other things:

- that the client was informed of the terms and conditions for the provision of services;
- that the client was informed of client rights;
- that the client participated in the full planning and review process; and
- that the IWRP contains essential information such as goals, time frames, evaluation procedures, and schedules, etc.

Inclusion of this information in the IWRP clarifies the roles, relationships, and duties of agency and client toward achieving the vocational goal. This is the essence of the IWRP process.

Section VI: Delivery of Services - Statuses 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, and 32

This section, used for Standard 12, complements the information provided in Section V. When these two areas are reviewed together, they describe the overall VR process, consisting of the plan (i.e., the terms, conditions, and information set forth in the IWRP needed to provide services) and the specific program of services undertaken to achieve the vocational goal embodied in the IWRP. By knowing the extent to which planned services are actually delivered, we can determine the extent of effective "follow through" on the service planning process, in keeping with the spirit of the IWRP legislation.

Section VII: Termination of Cases

Section VII relates to Standards 10 and 12. As might be expected given its focus on eligibility, the questions used for Standard 10 focus on non-successful closures: 08's (from both 02 and 06), 28's, and 30's. For these closure statuses, Standard 10 attempts to assess (through review of case record documentation) the following compliance issues:

- Does the case record document the ineligibility/termination decision, and the basis for that decision?
- Have clients been granted their legal rights to participate in the ineligibility/termination decision?
- Have clients been informed of their right to an annual review of the decision? and
- Have the required annual reviews occurred, and the results been documented?

The need for this information is twofold. First, it is reasonable to expect that supervisory personnel might want to review any given case involving ineligibility or unsuccessful termination for any given counselor. Management personnel should have the ability to review cases samples at random (i.e., across all counselors, as in an audit-type procedure), or to target reviews to particular counselors (as might be needed for less experienced counselors). Either way, it follows that for any case of ineligibility or unsuccessful closure, the closure action and the basis for it must be adequately documented in the case record.

The information in Section VII is important for a second reason, which stems from VR's desire to protect the rights of its applicants and clients. The best way to ensure such client protection is to require proof in the case record that the necessary steps have occurred: for example, a "Bill of Rights" signed by the client; a schedule for review, signed perhaps by the client; and "Results of Review" form, which could be signed by the client.

In short, VR agencies need to know the reasons for unsuccessful closures, and need to ensure that the ineligibles and unsuccessful closures are aware of their rights to review. Once this is ensured, then informed clients -- whose circumstances have changed such that they are eligible -- hopefully will reenter the system later and be successfully rehabilitated.

In addition to its uses in assessing eligibility-determination processes, Section VII is also used for Standard 12, on the IWRP. The questions used here seek to ensure:

- that the rationale for closure decisions are recorded on the IWRP; and
- that the client (or his/her appropriate representative) was consulted prior to the closure decision.

Provision of this information ensures that the agency has a source from which it can draw information about past ineligibility decisions, to make sure they were made in a consistent manner, and to ensure that client rights were protected during the closure process.

Finally, several questions pertaining to 26 closures are included in Section VII. These questions will be used for problem identification.

Section VIII: Timeliness Assessment Instrument

The Timeliness Assessment instrument responds directly to Standard 11. It is designed to link subjective assessments of the timeliness of case movement to objective data on the length of time spent in various statuses by different disability types. The assessments are used in conjunction with data on client characteristics and services provided, to investigate how agencies might avoid undue delays in the service process.

SAMPLE SELECTION AND FREQUENCY OF REVIEW

As designed, the MCRS does not need to be completed on all individuals in a given VR system to determine the level of compliance with each of the four Procedural Standards represented in this system. Such a determination can be made based upon a review of a selected sample of cases. This selection process, however, needs to consider a number of issues in order to ensure that the sampled cases accurately represent the experiences of the general population. Originally, it was thought that this representativeness could be achieved by randomly selecting a number of cases from each of the potential closure categories. This strategy, however, did not result in a sufficient number of cases in certain classifications to allow for a full analysis of all of the issues identified in the four standards. This problem can be corrected simply by incorporating an additional element into the sampling framework: specifically, the variable "entered/did not enter extended evaluation" should be included as a sampling criterion and the individual selecting the sample should be careful to include a sufficient number of cases in which entry occurred. Likewise, future data collection efforts should include 08's in sufficient numbers to allow assessment of compliance with the regulations pertaining to ineligibility determinations.

In addition to including a sufficient number of cases from all relevant closure categories, it is also beneficial to conduct case reviews on a sample of those clients currently in-service. Initially, those cases selected for review in the pretest were cases for whom services had been terminated. In assessing this procedure, pretest reviewers noted that since the sample included only closed cases, there was no possibility for using the review process as a management tool. To correct this short-coming, it is recommended that agencies select cases for review that are at various points in the service system, including eligibility, extended evaluation, plan development, service provision, and closure. By selecting cases from the full range of stages in the service process, the MCRS can be used not only to analyze the issues surrounding successful and unsuccessful closures but also to assess current operating procedures and to offer the possibility of taking corrective action in those cases where the MCRS indicate problems exist.

The last point concerning conduct of the data collection relates to the physical location of the data collection effort. Logistically, it is preferable to centralize the data collection activity in one place (e.g., the state's central offices). However, it was noted during the pretest that requiring removal of case files from the district offices was problematic in cases where the files were needed by caseworkers or clients. This problem will be further exacerbated by the suggestion that the sample also include in-service statuses. This issue should be considered and resolved as appropriate in each particular state. A possible solution might involve the reviewers traveling to individual district offices to conduct reviews, if this can be done without incurring excessive travel or other costs.

Statewide assessments should occur every three years, and never less frequently than every four years. These statewide assessments should be supplemented by more frequent, targeted spot checks, as suggested by the statewide assessments.

## CASE REVIEWERS: QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The Procedural Standards rest squarely on the process of case review. The quality of those reviews, and their resulting data, is strongly influenced by the capabilities of the people who conduct the reviews. There are four main qualifications an effective case reviewer must have:

- The most important quality desired in a reviewer is that he/she have an intimate familiarity with a wide variety of aspects of state agency operations. The MCRS requires that reviewers possess detailed understanding of all aspects of the program's operations.

- In addition to having familiarity with the particular agency's overall operations, ideally case reviewers would have experience in casework (i.e., counseling), casework supervision, overall operations, and administration.

- The third quality is that of "aloofness": the reviewer should have no conflict of interest when reviewing cases.

- Finally, the last qualification has less to do with the personal qualifications of reviewers than with the way the reviewer positions will be structured. Ideally, the reviewing function will be one of the reviewers' main assigned responsibilities. In other words, the reviewing task should not be shifted to different personnel with each data collection cycle. The benefits of maintaining a core staff of reviewers are numerous. First, to the extent that the MCRS is part of a person's overall duties, perceptions that this type of data collection is intruding on the person's other regular duties will be minimized. Further, by assigning the review function to particular individuals, the person's familiarity with the task will be reinforced, his or her reviewing ability will be improved, and the necessity for intensive training with each new data collection cycle will be obviated.